City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society

P.O. Box 875, San Bernardino, CA 92402

www.sbhistoricalsociety.com

LIBRARY NEWS NOVEMBER 2012

By Richard D. Thompson, Librarian

JAMES WESLEY WATERS, SR.

The San Bernardino Society of California Pioneers was founded on January 21, 1888, and thus the 125th anniversary of this event will occur in just a couple of months. With this in mind, it seems fitting to commemorate the society's founding with a biography of the charter first vice president, James W. Waters, Sr. An outstanding biography, titled *Trapper Jim Waters,* was written by Arthur Woodward for the Los Angeles Corral of the Westerners, and was subsequently placed on San Bernardino City's website. We have reproduced it below for your edification and enjoyment.

We have on display several items donated to us by one of "Uncle" Jim's descendants, Mary Renter. Below is a photo of Mrs. Renter presenting these items. There are four large oil paintings, one of James Sr. and his wife Luisa Margetson, and one of James Jr. and his wife Anna Elizabeth Freeman. We also have twelve wooden chairs which served as loge seating for the Waters family and friends in the San Bernardino Opera House, which was built by Waters in 1882. This was four years before Los Angeles had an opera house—quite a cultural feather in the cap of the little frontier town. These items are displayed proudly in both the Railroad Museum at the former Santa Fe Depot, and in the Meeting Hall of the San Bernardino City Historical and Pioneer Society at Eighth and D Streets. Drop in some time and take a look.

Mary Renter presents James Waters memorabilia to Mayor Pat Morris (left) and President Steve Shaw

Three of the large portraits donated by Mrs. Renter
Left: James Waters, Sr.
Right: James Waters, Jr., and wife Anna Elizabeth Freeman

One of the 12 opera house chairs donated by Mrs. Renter

OPERA HOUSE
SAN BERNARDINO
MARTHA L. KIPLINGER, Manager

Thursday Evening, March 16, 1899

ENGAGEMENT EXTRAORDINARY!

The Dailey Stock Company

THE GREATEST DRAMATIC ORGANIZATION ON THE PACIFIC COAST

SUPPORTING MISS MAY NANNARY

Presenting a Splendid Repertoire of Standard Plays.

THURSDAY NIGHT

"DREAM FACES"

An One-Act Heart Story.

CAST.

Robert Lumley.....E. J. Blunkall
Phillip, his nephew.....Frank Clayton
Lucy.....Fay Courtney
Aunt Margaret.....May Nannary

TIME—THE PRESENT.

Nat Goodwin's Three-Act

"CONFUSION"

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Christopher Blizzard.....W. R. Dailey
Mortimer Mumbleford.....E. J. Blunkall
Rupert Symberg.....Frank Clayton
James, a butler.....Ed F. Nannary
Dr. Bartholomew Jones.....J. F. McDonald
Michael Muzzle.....Jos. Roberts
Rose Mumbleford.....MAY NANNARY
Lucretia Trickleby.....Mrs. Louis Belmour
Violet.....Lyllian Atwood
Maria, a domestic.....Fay Courtney

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I.—Christopher Blizzard's home. A pet wanted. The plot. The disheartened parents. The telegram.
ACT II.—Lucretia's mistaken identity. Confusion.
ACT III.—Mortimer is ill. Hypnotic power. The pug dog and the baby.

FRIDAY EVENING—"YOUNG MRS. WINTHROP"

CHANGE OF PLAY NIGHTLY

POPULAR PRICES

10c. 20c. 30c.

John Flagg, Printer, San Bernardino.

Opera house ad - 1899

TRAPPER JIM WATERS

By Arthur Woodward

(Jim Waters was one of the first pioneers, politicians, and land-developers that San Bernardino ever had. He built the first San Bernardino Opera House. This article was first published in 1955 for the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners.)

Acknowledgments

In the Colorado Springs Pioneer Museum, Colorado is a collection of documents known as the *Cragin Papers.* These consist of hundreds of entries in notebooks and separate manuscripts which were written during the late 1890's and early 1900's by Prof. F. W. Cragin of Colorado Springs, who spent long days and weeks in the field interviewing the last survivors of the Old West. His contacts with the men and women who helped make our frontier history, and their first hand accounts of personalities and places, Indian tribes, and pioneer lore are, today, invaluable to the students of history. To Miss Dorothy Smith, Curator of the Colorado Springs Museum, I am deeply indebted for permission to browse through the *Cragin Papers,* containing names of the old mountain men, the description of old Ft. El Pueblo, as well as other odd bits of historic data which I have incorporated in the biography of Jim Waters. All were obtained from this collection.

I am likewise indebted to the staff of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California for permission to use certain data, embodied in the *George Beattie Collection*, pertaining to Jim Waters and his companions, John Brown and Rube Herring.

To Miss Caroline Waters and her sister Miss Leila Waters, daughters of James Wesley Waters, I am indebted for their kindness in supplying me with family data and photographs.

Last, but by no means least, I owe my thanks to Westerner Don Perceval for his excellent portrait of Trapper Jim.

Arthur Woodward

In the year 1842, a small group of free trappers began work on a Mexican-style fort or "placita" on the north bank of the Arkansas River, a short distance above the junction of that stream and the Fountain Qui Bouille, in what is now Southern Colorado.

This adobe fort faced east. The double gates opened upon the Arkansas which flowed swift, clear and green a few yards from them. A round bastion, loopholed for rifles, guarded the northeast corner of the post and a similar tower stood at the southwest corner. In the southeast portion of the walled enclosure was a large corral for horses and mules. The living quarters, adobe rooms with flat, earthen roofs over ceilings of small peeled poles and brush resting on heavy vigas or rafters lined the interior of the quadrangle on the east and north sides of the patio. A trading store, with one or two residential rooms attached, occupied a space on the inside of the eastern wall between the heavy gates and the northeast bastion.[1]

This fort was called El Pueblo (The Town) and later, Fort El Pueblo. The first settlers were mostly Americans, with a scattering of French-Canadians and their New Mexican and Indian wives and consorts.

Among the original founders and inhabitants of El Pueblo were, Jim Beckwourth, the boastful mulatto, who claimed later that he built the trading post at that site; Simeon Turley, (original owner of the famous distillery on the Rio Hondo, home of the fiery "Taos lightnin'," a few miles north of Taos, New Mexico); old Charles Autobees who freighted from Independence to El Pueblo for Turley, Bob Fisher, Bill and Ed Tharp, brothers who were engaged in the Indian trade; Matthew (Matias) Kincaid (with whom Kit Carson stayed in 1826), Tom Tobin, Bill New (Kit's old time trapping companion); G. S. Simpson; the cross-eyed Alexander (Alejandro) Barclay, who stole Kincaid's common-law wife, Terracita Suaso; Charles Towne, Bill Garey (Alias Gerrier, or Guerrier), Rube Herring, John Brown and Jim Waters. Dick Wootton was also present, as were Francis Conn, Joseph Mantz, Tim Goodale, A. C. Metcalf and many others. Kit Carson was a visitor, as was Jim Bridger. Now and then Old Bill Williams ambled in on his boney old horse. Here, too, came Levin (Colorao) Mitchell, Maurice LeDuc, Calvin Jones and later many emigrants and soldiers.[2]

Life among these mountain men was free and easy. They made their own laws. Disputes, which were frequent, were settled with the rifle, pistol or knife. They drank heavily and at their fandangos in the fort they frequently sloughed off old friendships and fought like trapped wild cats. Then it was that the huge, powerful New Mexican, "Gallegon" (Big Gallego) went into action. He seized the drunken trappers, tied them up, and piled them in a corner of the fort to sleep it off.[3]

Men and women lived together in a more or less casual fashion. Sometimes, if it was convenient, and suited their purposes, they were legally married by bell and book in the adobe churches of Taos, Mora, Santa Fe, or other villages in New Mexico, whence came most of the wives and mistresses of these mountaineers. The children of these natural alliances seemed to thrive as well as those over whom the word had been spoken, and such offspring were reared and accepted as solid citizens of the communities in which they lived. Now and then there were women (and men), who moved in and out of beds more frequently than others. No one cared. That was his or her own personal affair. A trapper died under the arrows of the Utes, Arapahos, Blackfeet or Apaches and his woman sorrowed for awhile, then realistically sought another mate. The dead man's children were accepted without reservation by the next man, and were reared along with the new brood without any distinctions between them. Many of these wives were full-blooded Indian women. Some were Spanish-Mexican and some were Mexican-Indian. They were accustomed to frontier life and accepted situations which other women of less fortitude would have refused to tolerate. These women reared broods of children, farmed the fields in the absence of their men on the long hunts, and if necessary, as frequently it was, they fought side by side with the trappers.[4]

On the trail they dressed skins, made camp and tended to the cooking. Now and then, when one of these Indian consorts learned that her man had taken another woman, or she grew tired of his actions, she would strip the lodge of her personal belongings and as many things of her erring mate's as she could lay hands upon, and with her children she would ride off to rejoin her people. A trapper in the field often had

a woman in each of the tribes with whom he traded, reasoning that when among his wife's relatives, his scalp and belongings were reasonably safe.

Trapper Jim Waters

This was the wild, free life that James Wesley Waters elected to live. He was born at Brainard's Bridge, in Rennessalear County, upstate New York, on January 30, 1813.

Of Waters' childhood we know but little. He left home when he was sixteen and took a job, presumably as mule driver on the Erie Canal, the opening of which had been celebrated October 20, 1825, barely four years before young Jim set out on his own.

He did not remain long at this task. Perhaps it wasn't what he sought. It is quite possible that Jim listened to the tale of some returning mountaineer who had passed a successful season in the Shining Mountains, or it maybe that he was a bit fiddle-footed and wanted to roam. Family tradition is silent on this point. The fact remains that Jim did head west, and eventually landed at St. Louis, fur mecca on the Mississippi in the early 1830's.

Like many of the young men of his day, Jim must have found the old town a fascinating place. The levees were alive with bustling roustabouts, loading and unloading cargoes from such ships as the *Red Rover, Winnebago, Natchez, Prairie* and many others. Here, came keel boats and mackinaws laden with furs from the Upper Missouri. In the rambling old *Planter's House* with its long galleries and bounteous table, Jim probably encountered some of the trappers or owners of fur companies, and from them he learned of the big money to be made taking beaver, mink, and otter.

At the present moment it is not known just when Jim left St. Louis for the Rocky Mountains. It was probably in the early thirties, when he was between eighteen and twenty years of age. He was in the fur trapping business seven or eight years before Ft. El Pueblo was founded, and during that time had gone on expeditions with Kit Carson, Jim Bridger, Bill Williams, Rube Herring, John L. Hatcher, Calvin Jones and others who had long been in the game.

He went north as far as the country of the Pend D'Oreilles, trapping around the head waters of the Columbia where they ran through a narrow, sedgy outlet from the lake bearing the same name. He had been with the Sublettes, Major Fitzpatrick and other famous men into the country of the Blackfeet, the Absaroka or Crow Nation, and he knew equally well the best trapping ground among the Shoshones, the Nez Perce, the Utes and Arapahoes. He hunted elk, grizzly and buffalo for food and hides. [5]

On one expedition out of Bent's Fort on the Arkansas, Jim was accompanied by Dick Wootton and Old Bill Williams. Let Uncle Dick Wootton tell what happened: [6]

"On another trip into this same country (the Purgatoire or "Picketwire" river, known also as the Rio de las Animas Perdidas, (The River of Lost Souls) when I was accompanied by 'Bill' Williams --- who was afterward a guide for General Fremont, and a noted scout --- and a trapper by the name of Walters (Waters), we were one afternoon making our way along through a rocky and rather thickly wooded canyon, not knowing there were any Indians near us, when I heard the crack of a rifle and saw Walters, who was a few feet ahead of me, throw up his hands.

"He cried out that he was shot, and would have fallen from the mule he was riding had I not sprung to his assistance. He recovered himself in a few minutes, and realizing we were being ambushed and could only save ourselves by a rapid flight, he clung to his mule, and we started at full speed down the canyon with the bullets from a score of guns whistling about us.

"When we emerged into an open space, where, if we were compelled to fight, we should not have an unseen enemy to contend with, we stopped long enough to ascertain the condition of our wounded companion. The shot had been fired at such close range that his clothes were almost powder burned, and my first impression was that the ball had passed entirely through his body. A closer examination developed the fact that the wound was less serious than that, but still bad enough. The ball had entered the left side just above the hip, but strangely enough its course had in some way been deflected so that it passed just under the skin, half way round the body, and came out on the right side nearly opposite where it entered.

"We dressed the wound as best we could and made our way back to Fort Bent, where Walters finally recovered, though, after this incident, he was never much inclined to venture into any portion of the Indian country, where he did not know that he would be perfectly safe."

Waters, in later years, said they cut the bullet out with a butcher knife, and that the first aid rendered by Wootton and Williams consisted of a liberal dose of "Taos lightning" doused into the wound, after which they wrapped a blanket around his middle. Thus crudely bandaged, he and his companions rode three days without food from the Big Bottom on the Purgatory, where the attack occurred, back to the safety of Bent's fort. Wootton said they were in Ute country when attacked, but family tradition, according to Miss Caroline Waters, a daughter of old Jim, who told me (in 1952) substantially the same story (as related by Wootton), said the Indians were Apache.

Bill Williams, the other mountain man who helped save Jim's life that day, was one of the most noted and eccentric of all the free trappers.

In his spare moments, Old Bill painted water colors of Indians and flowers. When he returned from the Fremont fiasco in 1849, Bill painted a picture showing the mountains covered with snow and black ledges of rocks, half covered, men trying to climb over them, and with the hillsides showing dark green pines. He gave this sketch to Mrs. Schenrick, [7] but shortly afterward she went away to school, and by the time she returned, the picture had disappeared.

Jim Waters was probably present at El Pueblo the day Old Bill got into an altercation with George Simpson in the blacksmith shop.[8] The two men nearly came to blows. Suddenly, Simpson grabbed his rifle which leaned against the wall. Bill, belt axe in hand, jumped behind the door and pulled it back to cover himself. Then he stuck the handle of the hatchet out from cover, pointed it like a pistol at Simpson, and at the same time said, quite seriously:

"Look out George, this feller never snaps!"

This bit of horseplay took the sting out of the argument. The bystanders roared. Simpson grinned a bit sheepishly, and promptly laid aside his weapon.

Bill got along famously with the Utes. He always carried a small pocket magnifying glass, which, when talking to the Indians he used as a seer might use a crystal ball. When he thought they were lying to him

he would look at them through the glass and make them believe he could read the real truth about what they were saying. Thus he inspired them with great respect for his glass, and they seldom tried to bluff him. It didn't pay to try to beat such powerful medicine.[9]

Among the women who came to live at El Pueblo during the early '40s was a New Mexican-Indian girl, known simply as Nicolasa,[10] nick-named 'Colasa' for short. Her last name is not given, although there is a possibility that it may have been Candelaria. She speedily became the *femme fatale* of the raw, little settlement. Nicolasa apparently had all the instincts of an alley cat. No one has left a description of her, but she must have had a certain wild beauty and animal magnetism that drew the mountain men to her as a wild bee tree attracts bears.

Prior to 1843, Colasa seems to have been living with a trapper by the name of Henry Beer.[11] Then, at a Fourth of July (Independence Day was one holiday which was always celebrated on the frontier), Valentine Johnson Herring, known to his friends as Reuben or more commonly "Rube," cast a longing eye upon the seductive Nicolasa. Rube's lanky six feet of sinewy man-hood, and his long black locks were not unpleasing to the fiery wench from New Mexico. Liquor flowed freely at Ft. Lupton, where the celebration was under way, and Beer and Herring, in their cups, decided to shoot it out. Beer took a Galena pill in his lights, and Herring collected Nicolasa as a result of better marksmanship. The climax of the duel was not pleasing to some of Beer's friends, since he was better liked than was Rube Herring. Feelings ran high, and a free-for-all was in the making. Bill New wanted to fight his old trail mate Kit Carson, but friends restrained both men. Eventually the fuss died down.

Now Rube discovered that he had a painter by the tail! Colasa was possessed of a vixenish temper and the two fought like bee-stung bob cats. It ended when Colasa left Herring's bed to take up with a French trapper known as Sissone or Sixhommes (the spelling of his name is uncertain).[12] They lived at El Pueblo, but with all the trappers milling around it was inevitable that, sooner or later, Nicolasa's roving eye would light upon a new victim.

The man she selected was John Brown,[13] a good friend of Waters and Herring. One would think that Brown, knowing the woman's reputation, would have steered clear of her. He was a sober man, born in Worcester, Massachusetts on December 22, 1817 and he had been in the mountains since the middle '30s.

John dabbled in spiritualism and claimed to have a spirit "guide" who warned him of danger from Indians and wild animals, but apparently the guide was asleep or absent when John fell under the spell of Nicolasa. At any rate, so the accounts go, John Brown shot Sissone, and Nicolasa went to live with the young New Englander.[14] Score two for the little brown hell-cat!

This alliance did not last very long. John had a combination ranch-store and grist mill on the Greenhorn River, south and east of El Pueblo. He was doing a thriving business there during the late 1840's,[15] and after he left Nicolasa he married a good woman, Luisa Sandoval, by whom he had a large family.[16]

Ed Tharp, the twenty-two year old brother of Bill Tharp, the Santa Fe Trader, lived with Nicolasa until Jim Waters fell under her spell. This was late in 1843. Jim became infatuated, and nothing short of a fight would satisfy either man. Ed was the youngest by eight years, but Jim was more experienced. The result was that Ed died in the duel.[17] His body was buried on the slope of Tenderfoot Hill, a few hundred yards east of the fort. Bill Tharp built an enclosure around the grave which was visible for many years, but finally the fence disappeared, and a few years ago pot hunters seeking Indian relics are said to have accidentally exhumed Ed's bones. Bill let it be known that he was "half froze for har," and he wouldn't be satisfied until Jim Waters' scalp hung at his belt. Jim decided that Nicolasa wasn't worth dying for, and fled to the mountains. He hid out on the Rio Amalgre, where a friend, A. C. Metcalf, kept him supplied with food and coffee for several days.[18]

Jim found the vicinity of Pueblo a mite too warm for his health, so he lit a shuck for Santa Fe. Here, he found a party of mountain men headed by Jim Beckwourth making ready to leave on a trading expedition to

Picture of James Beckwourth (Added in 2008)
Courtesy of John W. Ravage, Black Pioneers: Images of the Black Experience on the North American Frontier (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1997, 2002)

California, via the Old Spanish Trail. The two Jims joined forces on this venture. They had forty horses and mules loaded with merchandise, and they arrived in Los Angeles in January; 1844, after an exciting trip overland, in the course of which they lost three Mexican muleteers at the hands of the Utes.[19]

While in Los Angeles Jim had a brainstorm. There were no wagons in California at the time, unless one counts the cumbersome, heavy wheeled ox *carretas* as wagons. At least there were no four wheeled vehicles in the country worthy of the name, so Jim decided that he would build one to help him in his trading. He had oak wood brought into Los Angeles from Yucaipa, about seventy five miles distant, a spot which later was to become his home. Then he discovered that there was not enough iron in all of southern California from which to forge the tires. He sent to Yerba Buena by a trading schooner, but in a month or so the craft returned...alas there was no iron in Yerba Buena, so Jim gave up in disgust. [20]

Family tradition states that, at this time, Jim hired a small vessel and prowled along the coast, gathering quantities of abalone shells which he knew would be good exchange for many buffalo robes and beaver pelts in the mountains and on the plains. It is quite likely that Jim also indulged in some sea otter hunting. The Americans who lived in California during this period, William Wolfskill, George Nidever, Isaac Sparks, etc. all ex-mountain men, now and then took to the sea in quest of the profitable otter and certainly Jim Waters was not a man to turn down an opportunity to take a few of the rich, lustrous pelts.

Jim Beckwourth claims that Waters was his partner during this period. In January, 1845, a year to the month after Jim arrived in California, a political storm which had been brewing broke with comic opera violence. Governor Manuel Micheltorena, with his hated army of *cholos*, aided by the opportunist Captain John Sutter and a small group of American riflemen (who had settled in the north) rode south to quell a revolt headed by Jose Castro and Juan B. Alvarado, politically ambitious southern Californians. To supplement his native forces, Castro called upon the Americans, living in and around Los Angeles, to help with their long rifles. Among those who rode with Castro and Alvarado were Jim Beckwourth and Jim Waters. The two forces marched and counter-marched. While scouting, Beckwourth encountered some trappers doing likewise for Micheltorena. The mountain men recognized each other, no shots were fired, and they sat down to smoke and palaver.[21]

As a result, by mutual agreement the Americans decided to sit out the next dance and watch from the side lines. They got behind a convenient rise of ground, and began playing cards and drinking. Now and then they would stroll over to see how the battle was coming along. The artillery on both sides were banging away and the vaqueros were racing around yelling and shooting, but aside from one or two horses and mules, there were no casualties. Castro's forces won and the excitement was over.

Jim Waters now thought it time to hit the trail east and unload his shells and furs. He planned to return to California in 1846, but war between Mexico and the United States broke out and changed his plans. Beckwourth also decided to head east, and when he did he drove along a large herd of stolen horses. By the time Jim got back to Pueblo, things had quieted down. John Brown was operating his store and grist mill on the Greenhorn. Hither came many of the mountain men to trade. In September 1846[22], Brown issued a rather quaint memo; "No all men by these presents that I, John Brown, am living on Greenhorn Creek." He sold axes, hoes, thread, buttons, trousers, hats, shirts, cloth, lead, ribbon, powder, percussion caps, candles, moccasins, beans, corn, flour---in short anything and everything. As was the common

custom when a trapper couldn't buy traps, he rented them for $8 apiece, and John Brown had traps to rent, as well as sell. Among those who came to the store on the Greenhorn were Edmond Conn, Capt. A. C. Metcalf, "Reubin" Herring, Calvin Jones, "Colorao" Mitchell, and Jim Waters. Jim Beckwourth stated that in 1846, he and his "partner," who may or may not have been Waters, opened a hotel in Santa Fe. This is quite possible since Jim Waters' name doesn't appear on John Brown's account books on the Greenhorn until late in 1846, and again in the spring of 1848. Hence Jim could very well have been operating a hotel in Santa Fe after his return from St. Louis in 1845; whither he had gone with his furs and robes after disposing of his shells.

It is quite possible that this was the trip to which John Brown referred in his book of mediumistic experiences, when he described how his spirit guide had conducted him to Pueblo during a night trance, and showed him Jim Waters in the post with the Washburn emigrant family, whom he had guided across the plains from St. Louis.[23]

It is difficult to trace the yearly wanderings of some of these men with restless feet. During the trapping season they were somewhere in the mountains taking the wily beaver, exploring new trails, or trading with Indians. At times, they headed for California to trade Navajo and Hopi blankets for California horses and mules, or simpler still, they went on horse stealing expeditions. During the 1830's and 1840's the mountain men often indulged in the latter pastime.[24]

But now times were changing. Late in 1848, Bill Williams, who was apparently indestructible, went on his last expedition. True, he survived Fremont's ill-fated expedition, but in the spring of 1849, in an attempt to rescue the papers and instruments which the Fremont party had been forced to cache, he died at the hands of the Utes. In vain, the mountain men at El Pueblo had tried to dissuade Fremont from making that fatal trek. Old Bill was the guide, and he had not been over enthusiastic about it, but Fremont, bull-headed as usual, had forced Williams' hand. As a result Bill lost his life.[25] With his passing, things didn't seem the same in the mountains.

Emigrants were pouring through the country, headed for California. Tales of the gold country eddied through the mountains of Colorado, and the old timers knowing that trapping was played out, began to desert their old haunts. Now they devoted more time to trading with the emigrants and to farming. Some turned to sheep herding. Others bought up the sore-footed stock of the gold seekers for next to nothing, fed and cared for the poor brutes, and re-sold them to other travelers.

John Brown and his coterie of friends on the Greenhorn, and in El Pueblo, decided it was high time to move. Accordingly, Brown closed out his books in 1848, and in the spring of '49, when the grass was high enough to provide forage for the stock, and the snows were leaving the hills and canyons, a small party, consisting of Brown, and his wife Luisa, and their young son John Jr., Matthew Kincaid and his little son Andres; Alexis Godey, Calvin T. Briggs, John Burroughs, L. P. Lupton, Rube Herring, Jim Waters and several others, unnamed, packed their goods and headed west via Salt Lake City.[26] Ah, yes, there was one other in the party, a woman by the name of Candelaria! [27]

The group arrived in Salt Lake on July 4, 1849. Here, Jim Waters left his friends to pilot an emigrant train south to Los Angeles, over the Old Spanish Trail with which he was now fairly familiar. The other mountaineers continued on to the northern mines and arrived at Sutter's Fort, September 15.

Jim took his party safely through the perils of the desert, and early fall saw his wagons rolling through the Cajon Pass and across the San Bernardino Valley to Rancho del Chino, where they rested. The "Account Book of Chino Rancho" [28] for October 29, 1849 carries this entry: "Jams Waters arvd from the Grate Salt Lake with a party of 114 men all ( ) to the Cheano in good helth with loss of amout 30 muls for wat of water and grass."

As soon as his charges were safely in southern California, Jim turned his horse's head north, and with his heavy Hoffman & Campbell rifle balanced across the saddle, and his well worn, patched shot pouch and powder horn slung at his side, he headed for the mines. There he met John Brown, Alexis Godey and Rube Herring. They decided gold mining wasn't too profitable, so Waters, Godey and Brown went to San Juan Bautista where they opened the St. Joseph Hotel and Livery Stable.[29] Jim remained there until 1852, at which time he left the partnership and once more struck south toward San Bernardino. He had liked the

looks of the valley ever since he had first crossed it in 1843. Now the Mormons were there in force. They had bought the land from Antonio Maria Lugo, and were prospering. Here, too, came John Brown and his family and the lanky Rube Herring, who at one time, possibly for the sake of expediency, had been a Mormon but who, according to Frederick Ruxton,[30] had renounced his newly adopted faith by throwing the Book of Mormon into the Arkansas river saying, "Cuss your darned Mummum and Thummum! Thar's not one among you knows fat cow from poor bull, and you may go to h---l for me." And turning away, old Rube spat out a quid of tobacco and his Mormonism together.

Jim Waters bought thirteen five-acre lots from the Mormon elders, Lyman, Rich & Company, in the heart of the new settlement.[31] With this purchase of real estate, Jim Waters, mountain man, was now on the way to becoming James W. Waters, solid citizen and builder of cities.

Painting of James Waters (Added in 2008; courtesy of Waters' Great-Great-Granddaughter, Mary Renter.)

He remained in and around San Bernardino and began raising stock. He went into a temporary partnership with John Reed of Puente, and on Sunday, March 6, 1853, John Brown, with some Indian vaqueros, headed a herd of about 980 head of Waters' and Reed's cattle, north toward San Jose.[32] The trail in those days was rough. There was no well laid out highway. At first the cattle made only six to twelve miles a day, but as the animals became trail-seasoned they covered about sixteen miles a day. After leaving Los Angeles they followed the route that carried them along the present Ventura Boulevard, through Triunfo Rancho, down to the Santa Clara River, thence along the beach past Ventura and Santa Barbara until they came to the entrance of Gaviota Pass. Here they traveled through the canyons and over the hills, lifting their chuck wagon by hand over the rocks. It rained and the mud made heavy going for animals and men. En route, they encountered grizzly bears, and on the 28th of March they camped at the mouth of a creek emptying into the Salinas River. Said Brown in his diary, "I call this creek 'Cross Creek,' because there is a cross hung up in the road on a tree where a Mexican was killed by the Indians."

When they arrived at Gilroy, Brown left the herd to visit his old friend Godey who lived two miles out of town. On the first of April, Waters went on to San Francisco. Brown hung around Godey's place for several days. Godey was at the mines but came home after receiving a message from Brown. After concluding his business with Godey, Brown returned to San Bernardino and reached home on the 26th day of April.

Jim remained in the north long enough to sell his cattle, then went back to San Bernardino. In the meantime, however, he had acquired a large ranch which he claimed was the best sheep and cattle ranch in Mariposa County, and in his own words, it was "opisete of temples and Marteases on the Jouquin River (San Joaquin), it is on the sink of the Chouchely Creek (Chowchilla)." He gave his address as "Horniatos, Mariposa County."[33]

Both Brown and Herring went into politics in San Bernardino in 1853, and in spite of the fact that they were Gentiles in a community predominantly Mormon, both men were elected to public office as Justices of the Peace.[34] Herring resigned this job to take over the duties of County Assessor, but his Mormon opponents soon ousted him from that position. Undaunted, Rube managed to hang on, and both he and Brown remained thorns in the side of the Mormon community for many years.

In February, 1856, Jim Waters married Miss Luisa Margetson, a native of London, England, and the wedding was solemnized by his old hunting companion, Justice of the Peace John Brown. Shortly after the wedding, Jim drove north to his Mariposa rancho taking with him his new bride and a flock of about 900 sheep, which he had purchased from Isaac Williams and Victor Prudhomme of Chino Rancho. It was on the Mariposa ranch that James Waters Jr. was born on December 12, 1856.

Original pencil sketch of the Yucaipa Rancho purchased by Jim Waters in 1858. Courtesy of Miss Caroline Waters.

Two years later, Jim returned to San Bernardino and bought the Rancho del Ycaipa (spelled variously Yucaipe, Ucype, Yucipa, etc.). With this purchase Jim became a permanent resident of San Bernardino County. Now, except for occasional get togethers with his cronies, Rube and John, and other mountain men who had settled in the vicinity, the old days were fast receding. As a land owner and a prosperous Citizen of San Bernardino, Jim, too, went into politics. He served as County Supervisor of San Bernardino County, 1866 through 1869, and again in 1874-75, and for a last time, 1880-1881.[35]

During the eventful years of the 1850's and 1860's, Jim prospered. He stocked the Yucaipa Ranch with fine horses and cattle. During the Civil War, his horse herds on the Yucaipa were raided and he lost all of his stock except two old mares.[36] However, by 1867 he had once more filled his pastures "with horses of improved breed." He owned cattle in far off Montana Territory. He held other property and herds of cattle and sheep in San Diego County.[37]

[Oral history and tradition attributed this adobe home to Sepulveda But it is now believed that Diego Sepulveda's adobe was located a few hundred yards

away and that James Waters, hunter, trapper, and mountaineer, built the Yucaipa Adobe in 1858 - 1859. John Dunlap, a Texas Cattleman, purchased the Yucaipa ranch in 1869. In 1954, the Yucaipa Woman's Club raised funds to save the deteriorated adobe dwelling from demolition. Eventually they gave the property to the County of San Bernardino.]

Yucaipa Adobe.
Photograph added in 2008 courtesy of the
San Bernardino Historical & Pioneer Society

In 1867 he bought a part ownership in the San Bernardino Rancho, and during June and July of this same year he erected buildings on his town lots in San Bernardino. He built a large brick building on the northeast corner of Third Street and Arrowhead Avenue, and another brick building on Third Avenue which was the Court House at one time. His teams hauled lumber for two new residences in town.[38]

In December 1867, Jim moved from Yucaipa Rancho into San Bernardino. All during the 1870's, he was a busy man. He leased the Chino Rancho, and on November 5, 1874,[39] Jim and his friend Harrison Bemis bought the Camp Cady Station buildings and stock on the Mojave River. This was a former military post abandoned in 1871. In May, 1876, Jim bought more land and sheep in San Diego County, and in 1877 he purchased a half interest in the Grape Vine Ranch on the Mojave, where he ran more cattle.[40]

On February 28, 1879, Jim's wife of nearly a quarter century died. He remarried a few years later.

During the last ten years of his life, Jim Waters continued to expand. In 1881, he and Herman Brinkmayer built the San Bernardino Opera House,[41] the first real amusement center the town ever had, and soon special trains were running into San Bernardino bearing visitors to enjoy the latest in vaudeville and opera. In February, 1887, Jim sold his San Bernardino Ranch on the Mission Road and moved into Starke's Hotel until his new home, which was under construction at Second and H Streets, could be finished. Here, he lived from November, 1887, until September 20, 1889 when he died.[42]

San Bernardino home of James Waters, southeast corner of 2nd and H Street. Added in 2008;
courtesy of the San Bernardino Historical & Pioneer Society.

Jim Waters had come a long way in his three-quarters of a century. He had seen the passing of the Indian, the beaver, and the buffalo. Trapper trails he had helped to blaze had become well established highways. His camps had become cities. His heritage was an honorable name, and a large family. His children[43] were James Wesley Jr., Martha Louise Waters Klipinger, Henrietta Waters Cole, Kate Margetson Waters Miller, Mildred Waters Lawson, Caroline Waters and Leila B. Waters.

One son, Henry, died on the Yucaipa Rancho, February 9, 1867, an infant of ten months.[44] His daughters, Caroline and Leila, born of the second marriage are (in 1953) still living in the old house at Second and H Streets in San Bernardino, and it is to these gracious ladies that I am indebted for much of the personal history of Jim Waters' later years. The heavy Hoffman & Campbell percussion rifle, which Jim probably purchased in St. Louis during the 1840's with his shot pouch, powder horn and bullet mold, were presented by his daughters to the Los Angeles County Museum. With this rifle is also a heavy Colt revolver, which Jim bought in California in 1849. Jim carried this for many years, and his son Jim Jr., also packed it until the end of the muzzle was worn smooth, at an angle.

So passed Jim Waters from the scene, mountain man, rancher, politician and builder of cities. Adios viejo...good hunting!

The heavy Hoffman & Campbell percussion rifle, which Jim probably purchased in St. Louis during the 1840's with his shot pouch, powder horn and bullet mold.

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