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# SAMUEL SUSSMAN SNOW

A Pioneer Finds El Dorado



By Reva Clar

It is currently the fashion in listing television credits to inform the audience that the show just seen was “created” by “so-and-so,” a statement which always induces the thought that, having just witnessed an act of genesis, the spectator should either rise respectfully from his seat or fall to his knees in reverence, depending on his religious background. Such stories and characters are never conceived, originated or simply devised, thus connecting them to human achievements, but by some miracle or Jovian act are “created.”

If one of these especially endowed writers were to “ate” a fictional character of the nineteenth century who was a European immigrant to the United States; a practicing physician; a fur trader dealing the Indians; leader of a large covered wagon train leaving Council Bluffs, Iowa, for Sacramento, California, in time to arrive for the gold rush; a storekeeper for the miners; owner of a gold mine that remained in his family and in production for nearly one hundred years; a rancher; father of nine children; and a trustee of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Placerville – what cries of amused derision would ring out!

Yet the occupations and accomplishments of this versatile hero are a straightforward description of Samuel Sussman Snow, one of the pioneer Jewish settlers of El Dorado County in California’s gold rush country.

Samuel Snow's eldest daughter, Carrie, became the wife of Rabbi Herman Davidson of Stockton, California, who was my maternal grandmother's brother and rabbi of Congregation Ryhim Ahoovim (now Temple Israel) from 1876 to 1896. I had known from early childhood that Aunt Carrie came from a family that reached California by covered wagon, that her father had been a doctor, and that her eldest brother was born in Council Bluffs just before the trip west. However, I had made no attempt, as I grew up, to learn more of her family's history.

In the summer of 1965 when I visited Carrie's son Samuel S. Davidson, at his San Francisco home, our conversation turned to his mother's family and its colorful past. Brought out and gave to me an old scrapbook of newspaper clippings compiled by his father and himself, in which were a large number of items relating to the Snows. On two subsequent visits, his recollections were recorded.<sup>1</sup> Later, his cousins, Walter Snow of Concord, California, and Charles Snow of Santa Ana, were interviewed to provide additional material for reconstructing the details of their grandfather's life in the early days of California.

Samuel Sussman Snow was born on March 18, 1818.<sup>2</sup> Although Samuel Davidson gave Snow's birthplace as Dusseldorf, his naturalization certificate lists the place of birth as Demmin, New Prussia. Of his background in Germany, little is known. There is a reference to his father's having been a rabbi.<sup>3</sup> When Snow's father remarried, Samuel did not get along with his stepmother and left Germany for the United States, where he arrived in New York on or about January 1, 1837.<sup>4</sup>

During his years in New York City, Snow studied medicine and received a diploma.<sup>5</sup> According to Samuel Davidson, his grandfather received his medical training at a French hospital. However, the present French Hospital was not founded until 1881 and little is known of the smaller medical institutions that existed in New York City in the 1840's.<sup>6</sup>

While living in New York, Snow married Paulina Fink, whose Catholic family also came from Germany, and whose birth date was June 28, 1827.<sup>7</sup>

After departing from New York, Samuel Snow settled for a time in Wisconsin, where he did fur trading with the Indians.<sup>8</sup> He was living in St. Croix County when he received his naturalization papers on July 30,

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Davidson, Interviews, May 20, 1969, and September 24, 1969, by the writer. References to Samuel Davidson are to these two interviews, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Naturalization Certificate, dated July 30, 1849, in the possession of Walter Snow, Concord, California. The family name in Germany was Snoek or Snook, but was changed when Snow arrived in the United States. Snow's middle name is also spelled Suisman or Susmon. Samuel Davidson, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Stockton Daily Record*, August 11, 1900, p. 3. c.1. "...Dr. Snow's father, who was a famous rabbi in Germany."

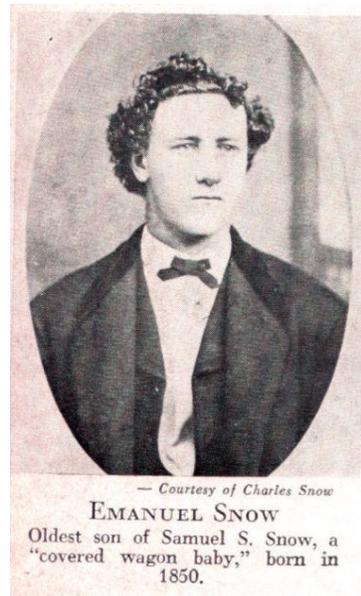
<sup>4</sup> Naturalization Certificate, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Davidson, interview, December 28, 1969, by Norton B. Stern. This diploma was later lost when fire destroyed Snow's tent store in Dogtown, near Placerville, California.

<sup>6</sup> Williman F. Norwood, *Medical Education in the United States Before the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1944), p. 147, states: "How many medical schools developed in New York City and its immediate vicinity before the impact of the Civil War...is perhaps not positively known..."

<sup>7</sup> Snow family Bible, list of dates of births and deaths, copied by Mrs. Charles Snow. Bible is in possession of Walter Snow, Concord.

1849. St Croix County, in the State of Wisconsin, is just across the border from Minnesota and close to St. Paul, which was apparently the location of the court in Minnesota Territory in which Snow was naturalized.<sup>9</sup> It was in Wisconsin that this young man, having already attained a medical education, began to demonstrate his resourcefulness and adaptability, his quickness to grasp the opportunities of a new environment. At this period and later, he reached each destination with funds and goods. Unlike the stereotype of the Jewish immigrant who headed for the Far West, Snow spoke the language well and had a profession and some means.



From Wisconsin, Snow continued on to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where, according to family tradition, he intended to settle permanently, for he bought a ranch there.<sup>10</sup> At this time he had no intention of going on to California, as the gold rush did not interest him.<sup>11</sup> But after spending the winter of 1849-50 in Iowa, Paulina, who was pregnant, found the severely cold weather far too rigorous and asked to move to the milder climate of California. On May 15, 1850, Snow's first son, Emanuel, was born "under the covered wagon," and shortly thereafter the family started the trip across the plains.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Clippings from San Diego Union, early August, 1932, in Davidson scrapbook: "One of the 10 last survivors of the 'Covered Wagon Baby Club,' Emanuel Snow, 82 of San Francisco... was born in a covered wagon on May 15, 1850, at Council Bluffs, Ia. His father was a fur trader with Indians for many years in Wisconsin.

<sup>9</sup> Copy of Naturalization Certificate in the possession of the writer.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Davidson, *op. cit.*, gives the acreage as 160, Charles Snow as 320. Charles Snow, Interview, December 21, 1969, by Norton B. Stern.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Davidson, *op. cit.*: "He wanted to pioneer some place. It was not the gold that brought him to California...he was coming for a new frontier to work in."

<sup>12</sup> *San Francisco Examiner*, September 9, 1925, p. 2, c. 2.: "...Emanuel Snow 75 years old... was born 'under the wagon at Council Bluffs, Iowa, on May 15, 1850, while his parents were pushing to the Golden West."

Snow helped to organize the wagon train and was chosen leader, not only because of his being a doctor, but undoubtedly because of his experience in dealing with Indians in Wisconsin and Iowa.<sup>13</sup> As far as we know, Samuel Snow was the only Jewish individual to head one of the many covered wagon trains that traveled from the Midwest to California. His success in this role is told of by his grandson, Samuel Davidson, who stated that the party came across the plains with no difficulties, due in great measure to Snow's friendly relations with the Indians along the way. By riding on horseback beside the wagons and helping to guide them across dangerous river crossings (points at which were seen the wrecks of vehicles that had failed to make the crossings), the Indians provided safe passage for the travelers. One horse was lost on the trip, in Utah, and its place in the team was taken by the cow which had been brought along to provide milk for the infant, Emanuel. The 'Wagon train arrived in Pleasant Valley, near Newtown, El Dorado County, California, in August, 1850.<sup>14</sup>

Continuing on to Sacramento, the Snow family took squatters' rights on land which was located on the present site of the California State Capitol grounds. Snow left his family there with instructions to await his return, while he went back to the Placerville area to look over the situation in the mines. With typical astuteness, he took along a load of trade goods to provide for the needs of the miners when he reached the digs. When Snow failed to appear after some time, the family became concerned, picked up their belongings and followed him to El Dorado County, thus losing their rights to the Sacramento land.

Snow settled first at Dogtown, where he set up a tent store from which he sold miners' supplies. A description of this area and reference to Snow appear in HISTORICAL SOUVENIR OF EL DORADO COUNTY, under the heading "Local History – Newtown."<sup>15</sup>

A cluster of cabins were (sic) erected on the low divide between the Weber creeks. This was called lowaville. Another cluster of cabins was erected on the creek, at the Mormon corral. This place some wag christened Dogtown, a name which stuck to it to the day of its death. A store was started by a man named Smith, which afterwards was kept by Samuel Snow.

A contemporary account also establishes the Snows in the Dogtown-lowaville area:

We were prospecting on the north fork of Weber or Weaver Creek, twenty-five miles east of Hangtown. It was Saturday, the rain had been falling nearly all day, when Sam Hit came into camp with the joyful news that a white woman had come to Snow's camp, sixteen miles away. Next morning, he struck out on foot to see such a wonderful thing as a white woman. When he arrived at Snow's camp it was late in the day, and as Mrs. Snow kept a restaurant, he had dinner at \$1.50. . . . he says he will never forget the day he walked thirty-two miles to see a white woman in California.<sup>16</sup> ..

The United States Census of 1850, for Placerville and its vicinity, lists Samuel Snow, 33, physician; Polina (sic) Snow, 23; and Emanuel Snow, 1/2. Despite his numerous and varied experiences since leaving New York, Snow categorized himself as a doctor at this time.<sup>17</sup>

On September 27, 1851, Paulina gave birth to her second son~ Joseph, in a tent at Diamond Springs.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Charles Snow, *op. cit.*, and Samuel Davidson, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Paolo Sioli, editor, (Oakland, 1883), p. 192.

<sup>16</sup> Archer B. Hulbert, *The Chronicles of the California Trail* (Boston 1931), p. 316. Hangtown was an early name for Placerville.

<sup>17</sup> Census, taken on November 27, 1850, p. 616

In 1851-52, Samuel Snow purchased a ranch house at lowaville. The building, erected in 1850, had a store and bowling alley downstairs, with living quarters for the family upstairs. An interview with Charles Snow, printed in a Placerville newspaper, described the Snow home.

lowaville: Of course there was an lowaville in El Dorado County. Charles Snow, who is associated with his brother in the Western Auto Supply store in Placerville, reports that the community was established about 1850, once had as many as six hundred residents, and became a "ghost town" about 1880. It was the old Snow ranch in the Newtown district about midway between Camino and Newtown on the Pleasant Valley Road. "My grandfather, Dr. Samuel Snow, who led a caravan across the plains in 1850, was there in 1852," Snow says. "At one time he operated a hotel, a ten.pin alley and store there. They were built out of Georgia pine, shipped around the Horn. My uncle, Jacob Snow, built a residence on the ranch in 1906, and a great deal of the lumber from the old buildings went into the newer ranch structures."<sup>19</sup>



— Courtesy of Reva Clar  
ENTRANCE TO SNOW MINE  
Samuel Davidson (left) and Walter Snow, grandsons of Samuel S. Snow, in the mid-1920's.



— Courtesy of Charles Snow  
1850 SNOW RANCH HOUSE, IOWAVILLE  
Snow family group in front of the old residence, about 1900.

During 1851, Snow purchased the mine which was to produce gold for him, his sons and grandsons, for nearly a century.<sup>20</sup> Snow made a wise choice, geologically, in selecting the site of the mine and ranch, as is shown in this description of the area:

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Snow, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> *Placerville Mountain Democrat*, May 22, 1941, p.4, c. 2. The 1906 house is still standing, just south of the North Fork of Weber Creek, on the east side of Snows road, and was seen by Norton B. Stern in November, 1969, and by Stern and William M. Kramer on June 29, 1970, at which time they met the present occupant of the house, Andrew Taylor, who was kind enough to show them some Snow mementos, including the Double-S branding iron. Snow, as well as his sons in later years, continued to buy adjacent land, until the family owned 1,200 acres, extending from Camino Ridge to Newtown (Newtown road today). The ranch is about nine miles east of Placerville.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Davidson, *op. cit.* This mine remained in the family until 1946, when it was sold to I.M. Johnson. The mine was worked by Samuel Davidson until the early 1930's when, with gold bringing only twenty dollars an ounce,

Surrounding Placerville were a number of less important towns which grew up during the gold days, for the ravines and flats of the entire region seemed to be rich with gold that was easily accessible to the placer miners. At an early date, the miners began to see evidence of an ancient river channel but its direction could not be definitely determined until mining operations had uncovered more of its course. It is apparent now that this was the ancient American River which took its rise in the Sierra near the present source of the South Fork and pursued a course similar to that stream to a point below Bullion Bend when it crossed the present channel to the south side and made its way north of the Sly Park House, Newton, Weberville, Diamond Springs ....<sup>21</sup>

A delightfully worded transaction on record in Placerville, indicates not only the extent of Snow's holdings in 1857, but also his concern for the welfare of his wife:

Deeded Samuel Snow to Paulina Snow, his wife, for and in consideration of the natural love and affection he hath and beareth unto the said Paulina Snow as also for the better maintenance, support and livelihood for her ... certain tract or parcel of land ... commencing at a point on the old emigrant road in Pleasant Valley ... and ditch ... extending through Newton to Lowaville ... also 1/2 of a tunnel and mining claim known as the Independent Tunnel Claim at Lowaville.<sup>22</sup>



— Courtesy of Charles Snow  
**HERMAN AND CARRIE SNOW**  
Fifth son and oldest daughter of  
Samuel S. Snow.

By 1860, the Snow's had five children: the Hebraically named Emanuel; then a Biblical trio – Joseph, 8; Jacob, 6; Benjamin, 4; and two-year-old Caroline (who later chose to be called Carrie). Snow now classified himself as “ditch agent” rather than “physician,” as in 1850.<sup>23</sup>

While this categorization would seem to indicate a loss of dignity, on the contrary, we may assume that Snow was again in command of the situation and that we are observing yet another facet of his career. “Ditch Agent” stresses Snow's involvement with mining and indicates a position of authority, as even today, in the irrigation districts of California, the “ditch tender” is a man of considerable importance who controls the allotment and distribution of water to the farmers. Snow was similarly involved in

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further operation was impractical. Various companies leased and operated the mine at intervals, but discontinued because of small profits.

<sup>21</sup> Owen C. Coy, *In the diggings in Forty-Nine* (Los Angeles, 1948), p. 33,

<sup>22</sup> El Dorado County, Deeds, Book C. March 11, 1857.

<sup>23</sup> United States Census, 1960, El Dorado County, Diamond Springs Township, June 11, 1860, P. 111

overseeing the storage and release of the water so essential to his own extensive mining operations and possibly those of his neighbors.<sup>24</sup> Samuel Davidson, in speaking of the family's mining activities, said:

We did all kinds of mining on this place – shafts, tunnels, hydraulic and everything. We had five miles of ditches running from North Weber Creek to the ranch house at Lowaville, bringing down 300 miners' inches of water. We had large reservoirs on the place, just above the house, for storing the water to fill the flumes. They had machinery to make the water to fill the flumes. They had machinery to make pipe, the old-fashioned machinery that turned the steel into cylinders the size they wanted. For hydraulic, they used pipe all the way from 18 inches in diameter down to 7 inches, all the way from 18 inches in diameter down to 7 inches. The monitor is the nozzle in the fixture with a swivel in it.

In the 1870 Census for El Dorado County, we find a complete list of the Snow family.<sup>25</sup> Snow now classified himself as "fanner."<sup>26</sup> Paulina had borne four more children, of whom three are listed: Herman – 8, Emily – 6, and Charles – 1. A daughter, Jennie, born after Emily, died in infancy and was buried on the ranch behind the old house, her grave marked only by a pile of stones.<sup>27</sup>

Having seen Snow thus far as physician, fur trader, wagon train leader, storekeeper, mine owner, rancher, a man completely in tune with the adventure, romance and daring of that day and an eager participant in the opportunities of a new land., we may now turn to a more personal, inner-directed aspect of this individual: his typically Jewish act of joining with his co-religionists in establishing a new Jewish community. Snow had retained his heritage. Paulina, on the contrary, felt no desire to carry on her Catholicism or to pass it on to her children.<sup>28</sup> While Jewish education was unavailable to the latter, their father's influence and inclinations can be seen through the later marriages of Emanuel, Carrie and Emily, and their identification with the Jewish faith.

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<sup>24</sup> H.E. and E.G. Rensch and M.B. Hoover, *Historic Spots in California* (Stanford, 1933), P. 92: "with the building of ditches to carry water to the mines, Newtown grew rapidly. Later on Hydraulic operations were carried on there, but in 1982, the town was destroyed by fire."

<sup>25</sup> Diamond Springs Township, August 15, 1870, p. 14. From the family bible (see Note No. 7) the following family record was obtained:

Samuel Sussman Snow, March 18, 1818 – July 9, 1892:

Paulina Snow, June 28, 1827 – March 2, 1882;

Emanuel Snow, May 15, 1850 – November 18, 1925;

Joseph Snow, September 27, 1851 – March 13, 1926;

Jacob Snow, September 25, 1853 – October 1, 1939;

Benjamin Snow, March 2, 1856 – date of death unknown

Caroline Snow Davidson, November 21, 1858 – May 7, 1949;

Herman Snow, March 7, 1861 – October 3, 1932;

Emily Snow Davis, December 1, 1864 – April 8, 1891;

Jennie Snow, February 4, 1867 – March 26, 1867;

Charles Snow, September 23, 1868 – September 20, 1932.

<sup>26</sup> El Dorado County, *The Great Register for 1867*, p. 52, No. 256: "Samuel Suisman (*sic*) Snow, 49, Prussia, farmer, Diamond Springs Township."

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Davidson, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Then the Placerville Hebrew Benevolent Society was organized on August 1, 1854, the group bought and fenced a –cemetery and fixed up a synagogue in time to be used for that year’s High Holidays.<sup>29</sup> There is no doubt that Samuel S. Snow participated in these early activities.

The original synagogue structure in Placerville was located on a lot at the corner of Cottage and El Dorado Streets. It was .17 of an acre in size. On April 30, 1878, M(ichael) Simon, E(dward) Cohn, S(amuel) S. Snow, trustees of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Placerville, sold this lot to James Bailey for the sum of twenty-five dollars.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, Trustees Simon, Cohn, and Snow bought a lot from Henry and Pauline Louis on the south side of Mill Street, 36 by 64 feet in size.<sup>31</sup> A hurricane that year had destroyed the first synagogue and it was decided to rebuild at the new site.<sup>32</sup>

A Placerville newspaper on October 26, 1861, had published the following:

At a meeting of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Placerville held on the 6<sup>th</sup> inst., the following resolutions were numerous adopted:

Resolved: That the thanks of this society are hereby tendered to the officers and members of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society of this city for their munificent donations to our Synagogue and for other valuable services connected with the promotion of our faith.

Resolved: That the Secretary is hereby ... to transmit a copy ... to the president of said society, and ... publication of same in the Mountain Democrat.<sup>33</sup>

The Placerville City Directory for 1862 lists the Hebrew Synagogue, Cottage Street, H.C. Glauber, Rabbi, and states:

The Hebrew Benevolent Society of Placerville meets on the first Sunday of every month in the Hall of Hope Hook and Ladder Company.”<sup>34</sup>

In 1867, the Placerville Mountain Democrat noted:

Monday last, the 5628<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Jewish New Year, was celebrated by our Jewish fellow citizens at their synagogue in this city, with accustomed religious ceremonies. Masters Samuel Louis and Nathan Kohn, being of the age of 13 years, were at the same time confirmed according to Jewish customs in such cases.<sup>35</sup>

Since Bar Mitzvah ceremonies for boys who had reached age thirteen during the past year were performed at the Rosh Hashanah services when the congregation was conveniently gathered together, it is a possibility that Emanuel and Joseph Snow had preceded the Louis and Kohn boys in observing this ritual.

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<sup>29</sup> *Occident*, Philadelphia, December, 1854, p. 472.

<sup>30</sup> El dorado County, Deeds, Book V, pp. 457-472.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 36-37

<sup>32</sup> Will O. Upton, *Churches of El Dorado County (Placerville, 1940)*, p. 43

<sup>33</sup> *Placerville Mountain Democrat*, p.2, c. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Fitch and Company, *Directory of the city of Placerville (Placerville, 1862)* pp.17, 19.

<sup>35</sup> October 5, 1867, p.2, c.1.

Samuel Snow's attendance at the synagogue is indicated by the set of five prayer books which belonged to him and which were given to the writer by Samuel Davidson. These books, published by L. A. Frank in 1864 and 1865 in New York, are leather-bound, gold-tooled and gilt-edged, with Samuel Snow's signature on the flyleaf of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur books. The latter volume bears Carrie's married name (Mrs. Herman Davidson), opposite her father's and her San Francisco address, which would signify her use of the book at a later date.

Through two letters in the possession of Walter Snow, we have verification not only of Snow's ability to read Hebrew, but of the existence of a sister and brother-in-law in Australia and possibly of a brother in London. The letters are written in Hebrew script, although the language is old German.<sup>36</sup>

The first of these communications, which bears the printed heading, "L. Levin & Sons, Merchants, Corowa," is dated in English, June 7, 1880. Corowa, in the southernmost part of New South Wales, Australia, is a small town that undoubtedly is in the gold-mining area of that province. Levin, who addresses Snow as "loving brother-in-law," speaks of writing a letter to "Jacob in London." He mentions the long wait for letters from California and England, and comments on Snow's information that he has not received letters written by Levin, since mail service at that time was neither efficient nor reliable.

He wrote:

We heard with consternation that you had such a rigid winter and everything is so expensive. I wish I could send you flour and fuel. I have sent 200 tons of flour to London and am awaiting to see what price it will bring.

Levin then sends greetings and best wishes from himself and Hannah, his wife, to a Cohen family in the Placerville area.

The second letter from L. Levin, which is imprinted with the crowned seal of Parliament, New South Wales, C. A., also has the English heading, "Sydney, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1883." The item of greatest interest here is the paragraph reading:

You will be interested to know that I was elected again into the Parliament. I have an additional two years in the Parliament where Harry Cohen is now the Minister of Justice.<sup>37</sup>

As late as 1880, the United States Census recorded the Snow family as a complete unit, all of the children living on the ranch, even Emanuel, who was noted as married, although his wife was not listed.<sup>38</sup> Samuel Snow again appeared as "farmer." While the youngest son, Charles, was still in school,

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<sup>36</sup> Copies in the possession of the writer. The letters were translated by Rabbi Morris Kaplan, Temple Knesseth Israel of Hollywood. Charles Snow, *op. cit.* said that the Snow ranch house was raided by postage stamp collectors about 1930 and stripped of letters and other material.

<sup>37</sup> L. Levin's business in Corowa was apparently that of a commission merchant dealing in grain and flour.

<sup>38</sup> The pages of the Davidson scrapbook contain a printed invitation: "Mr. and Mrs. H. Davis solicit the pleasure of your company to the nuptial ceremony of their daughter, Miss Sarah Davis and Mr. Manuel Snow, Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1877, at 3 o'clock, P.M., No. 178 Perry Street." The couple presumably lived on the ranch for some time, then moved to San Francisco. Two obituaries for Joseph Davis was probably a brother or cousin of Sarah's father, Henry. Joseph Davis had served as president of Congregation B'nai Israel of Sacramento. Emily Snow married Charles Davis, Henry's son.

each of the five older sons was classified as “laborer,” a forthright description that accurately represented their many duties on the ranch and in the mine.

Unfortunately, Paulina, the recipient of Snow’s “natural love and affection,” lived but a short time beyond this period, her life ending on March 2, 1882. The local newspaper reported:

SUDDEN DEATH – On the morning of March 2d, at lowaville, near Newtown, Mrs. Paulina Snow, wife of Samuel Snow, one of the oldest and most respected residents of that section, and one in usual good health, apparently went to work on the week’s washing. About ten o’clock she felt slightly unwell, lay down, commenced vomiting and about four o’clock, died. It is believed to have been a case of paralysis.<sup>39</sup>

Paulina’s untimely death at fifty-four, stresses the role of his hard-working pioneer wife and mother, in providing for the needs of her large family; for she virtually ran a chuck wagon and laundry at a time when working equipment consisted of such basics as wood stove, wash boiler and washboard, with power provided by her own two arms. Add the fact that her arduous duties were performed through nine periods of pregnancy and no surprise can be felt at her early demise. Her grave in the Jewish cemetery at Placerville is marked by a white marble stone ornamented with a flying dove and reads,

**PAULINA, WIFE  
OF SUSMON SNOW,  
BORN JUNE 28, 1827  
DIED MARCH 2, 1882.**

With Paulina gone, Carrie assumed the responsibility of caring for her father, brothers, and sister. That she was well equipped for this task is beyond question. Not only was she proficient in housekeeping, but it was she who had been assisting her father as he carried on his medical practice, which he continued to do throughout his lifetime, despite the fact that he did not care enough about medicine to make it his sole vocation. His practice was local, confined to the Newtown-lowaville area, and included miners and Indians as well as his close neighbors.<sup>40</sup>

Samuel Davidson said that Carrie recalled, when she was a child, her father’s going at night on horseback to treat an Indian woman whose husband had come to ask for help. The man brought a horse for Snow to ride and a rawhide pouch of gold for payment, both of which Snow refused, saying that he would ride his own horse and that he wanted no payment. The Indian, in gratitude for the care given his wife, would often stop at the ranch and offer his help in cutting wood or doing any necessary chores. Snow treated patients in a room of the ranch house and medicines were dispensed there with Carrie’s help. A prescription written in Snow’s hand was shown to the writer by Samuel Davidson, who said that a cupping device of Snow’s own was thrown away in later years by the family, along with other mementos. During her lifetime, Carrie brewed various infusions when any family member was sick. Snow delivered many of the babies born in the vicinity, and in serving as his assistant, Carrie became a qualified midwife.

Charles Snow recalled that during the slow winter days, Jack Raffeto, an old-timer of Placerville, used to come into the Western Auto Supply store run by him and his brother, Walter, to talk –about old times and tell them stories about Samuel Snow. He never failed to remind them that their grandfather brought him into the world. This was in the 1930’s, before Charles left for Southern California, and at

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<sup>39</sup> *Placerville Mountain Democrat*, March 4, 1882, p. 3, c.1

<sup>40</sup> Samuel Davidson, *op. cit.*

that time, Raffeto was an old man, owner of the Raffles Hotel and a great deal of other local property. Mr. Raffeto and Charles' father, Herman Snow, were boyhood friends.<sup>41</sup>

.t age fifteen, Herman Snow had poliomyelitis, and it left him weak and limping. No one knew what this ailment was at the time, but Samuel Snow wisely advised his son to take to the road and go down to a warm, dry climate to regain his strength. He wandered into Mexico and was away about three years. When he returned he was healthy and strong.<sup>42</sup>

During the early summer of 1891, Snow suffered a stroke which left him partially paralyzed. This could have been brought on by shock and grief at the untimely death of his young daughter, Emily Davis, on April 8 of that year, from complications following childbirth.<sup>43</sup> Snow's will, dated June 4, 1891, and undoubtedly drawn up after the stroke, mentions Emily's baby Viola, as a beneficiary in his estate.

A Year later, on July 9, 1892, Snow's life ended.<sup>44</sup> The Davidson scrapbook contains a detailed but unidentified Placerville newspaper clipping on Snow's death:

#### DEATH OF SAMUEL S. SNOW

One of the oldest residents of El Dorado County died at his home near Newtown, last Saturday night about twelve o'clock, at the age of a little more than seventy-four years. Mr. Snow was attacked by a paralytic stroke over a year ago, and since that time has been an invalid, having only partial use of his limbs. Last Saturday afternoon he was seized by a severe pain which continued during the evening and his condition became gradually worse till death ensued at midnight. His intelligence was good and his mind active to the last in spite of the paralysis. Mr. Snow was a native of Germany and of the Jewish faith. He came to California across the plains in 1849 (sic), lived for a time at Diamond Springs and kept a general merchandise store on Webber (sic) –Creek during the 50's. After discontinuing this business he engaged in mining and farming near Newtown, which are both continued by his family. Mrs. Snow died about ten years ago. The family surviving the death of these parents is composed of six sons and one daughter, Miss Carrie Snow, now residing at Newtown. All are grown, and two sons now reside outside the county, one in San Francisco, another in Washington. The funeral occurred in this city last Monday afternoon, the remains being interred in the Jewish cemetery, where Mrs. Snow was also laid away for the final rest, years ago. There was a long train of carriages from the vicinity of the residence bearing neighbors who thus testified to their respect for the memory of the deceased. Mr. Snow was a man of much energy, intelligence and business sagacity, and many of his sterling traits of character are reproduced in the family of estimable young people he has left behind him.

His white marble gravestone bears his name at its arched top, with a pair of clasped hands carved below. Its inscription reads:

**SAMUEL S. SNOW**  
**DIED JULY 9, 1892**  
**AGED 74 YRS., 3 MOS., 21 DAYS.**  
**A NATIVE OF GERMANY.**

He estate which Snow left consisted of 365 acres of land in El Dorado County; a lot on Hayes Street, San Francisco; a \$1,150.00 bank deposit, \$500.00 worth of gold dust; plus livestock, farm implements, etc.

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<sup>41</sup> Charles Snow, *op. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> In the Davidson scrapbook is an unidentified, undated clipping, from a San Francisco newspaper, on her death: "Last Wednesday morning, there died in this city, Mrs. Emma (sic) Davis (nee Snow), the beloved wife of Mr. Charles Davis... only 27 years of age at the time of her death..." She was buried in the Hills of Eternity Cemetery, Colma, California.

<sup>44</sup> *Placerville Mountain Democrat*, July 16, 1892, p. 9, c.2.

Specific bequests were made to Joseph, \$750.00; Charles, \$250.00; Caroline, \$500.00; all others to share in the balance. Emanuel and Joseph Snow were named executors of the estate by the probate court.

Snow's holdings included the water ditch and the dam on the North Fork of Weber Creek, which were appraised at \$500.00. His personal property, such as horses, goats, furniture, wagons, wood, etc., was appraised at \$5,032.92. His El Dorado County real estate holdings were auctioned off on July 13, 1895. The San Francisco lot was sold to Sarah Snow, Emanuel's wife, for \$1,600.00, at public auction. Mention is made, in the records, of the payment of \$40.00 to the Rev. Joseph Leonard Levy (of Congregation B'nai Israel of Sacramento) for traveling expenses and funeral services on July 11, 1892.<sup>45</sup>

During 1895, Emanuel and Sarah built a house on the above-mentioned San Francisco lot. It was in this house that Carrie Snow and Rabbi Herman Davidson, after a courtship that had continued for ten years, were married on June 20, 1897, by Cantor Joseph Rabinowitz of Congregation Beth Israel, San Francisco. Samuel, named after his grandfather, was born to them in April, 1898. Occasionally Carrie would augment the family income by cooking for the miners at the ranch. There were bunk houses on the place to accommodate the men who worked the mine during periods when it was leased to outside companies; and Carrie, in providing meals for them, could clear a good profit, since the ranch produced most of the foodstuffs needed. Samuel Davidson remembers these times and his being cared for by an Indian woman, "Old Susan," while his mother was busy. Carrie, emulating her mother's enterprise of a half-century earlier, could turn an honest dollar by feeding the gold miners.

Of all the Snow children, Carrie had the longest life. She died on May 7, 1949, at ninety years of age, one year short of a century after her father reached California. She is buried next to her husband in Ahavas Achim Cemetery at French Camp, California.<sup>46</sup>

Except for Benjamin, who fades from the family's history after his move to Vancouver (even the date of his death is unknown), the Snow sons throughout their lives continued their activities in mining, ranching, stock raising and lumbering, on the Snow land. Their adventuresome spirits drew them afield occasionally in the years after their father's death, when the challenge of the gold rush in Alaska took Emanuel, Joseph, Herman and Charles to the North Country. On the trip up, the ship on which they were traveling caught fire and all of their equipment was lost, a misfortune which did not deter them. Charles, unmarried, remained in Alaska for two years, 1898 to 1900, but his brothers went home for the winter, then returned north. Apparently no great fortune was made by any of them. The brothers also mined for silver in Nevada at one period, with negligible results.

Emanuel was the most colorful and articulate of Samuel Snow's sons, as is shown in the Davidson scrapbook clippings that record various interviews and show his photograph. As a charter member of Placerville's Society of Territorial Pioneers, he took great pride in his status as a "covered wagon baby."<sup>47</sup> During California's Diamond Jubilee in 1925, Emanuel and his companions were honored by the state government on Admission Day.

#### COVERED WAGON BABIES MEET

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<sup>45</sup> El Dorado County, Probate Record, No. 394

<sup>46</sup> During the 1940's, the writer brought her children, Miriam and Richard, to visit Great Aunt Carrie on more than one occasion. Carrie took great delight in talking to them as they sat in the high-ceiling, double-parlor of the Hayes Street house in San Francisco.

<sup>47</sup> Paolo Sioli, *op. cit.* p. 143

The fine old people who made it possible for California celebrate the Diamond Jubilee were the jubilee organization's guests last night at a banquet and theater party. The city paid them tribute. Forty five of them, everyone born in a covered wagon when the emigrants were coming to California, they represented almost every section of Northern California... Emanuel Snow, 75 years old, was the oldest boy-baby there, and so spry that he danced a fandango with his hostess, Mrs. Sears. He was born "under the wagon" at Council Bluffs, Ia., on May 15, 1850, while his parents were pushing to the Golden West.<sup>48</sup>

Mining seems to have been Emanuel's primary interest as demonstrated in a newspaper clipping from Davidson's scrapbook, without date or identification, which says in part:

Emanuel Snow is a miner with a practical experience in the working of auriferous gravels of which few can boast, having been engaged in the business in this State for a period of over thirty-five years as man and boy. He came to California when quite a youth in 1850, and almost continually ever since he has devoted his time exclusively to the exploration of gravel deposits. His vast experience in this branch of the industry is calculated to give weight to any opinion he may express in regard to the value of any property of this class, and more especially when he speaks from a personal acquaintance with its merits acquired by actual working tests.

Emanuel was active until his death at eighty-five on November 18, 1935.

Emanuel Snow, a "covered wagon baby," who came to California in 1849 (sic), died yesterday. Mr. Snow was 85. Mr. Snow was a member of San Francisco Lodge No. 21, B'nai B'rith. The Lodge will be in charge of funeral rites. . . . He was also one of the most active members of the Jewish Community Center on California Street ....<sup>49</sup>

Emanuel Snow was buried in Hills of Eternity Cemetery, Colma, California, beside his wife and daughters. Of all the Snow sons, it was he who throughout his lifetime carried on the Jewish tradition and participated in its observances. Unquestionably, his living in San Francisco for a part of his life made it easier for him, than for the other sons, to form Jewish associations. His nephew said of him, "he was a real sincere Jew who kept the Jewish religion."<sup>50</sup>

Although Emanuel was not a dues-paying member of any San Francisco synagogue; he did attend Congregations Emanu-El, Beth Israel, and Sherith Israel. His sister, Carrie, attended Congregation Sherith Israel, because Rabbi Jacob Nieto was her husband's friend, as was Rabbi Myer S. Levy of Congregation I Beth Israel.<sup>51</sup>

The precious yield of the Snow mine was a tangible and familiar commodity to the family. In later years it was earned in a black satchel, by a member of the family, to the San Francisco Mint. When Carrie Davidson wanted a Mogen David to wear as a locket, her son Samuel went to the mine, picked up the necessary amount of loose gold, smelted it, then cast a Star of David in almost pure, unalloyed gold. Carrie wore it for many years.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *San Francisco Examiner*, September 9, 1925, p.2, c.2.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, November 19, 1935, p. 8, c. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel Davidson, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> The writer has Emanuel's prayer book for the High Holidays, printed for Congregation Sherith Israel, compiled by Rabbi Jacob Nieto (San Francisco, 1910). "E. Snow" is stamped in gold on the cover.

<sup>52</sup> This Mogen David, which weight five-eighths on an ounce on Samuel Davidson's gold scales, and measures one and three-eighths inches tip-to-tip, was given by him to the writer.

In the 1890's, Jacob and Hennis Snow, using some of the proceeds from their mining, bought timberland, opened mills, and went into the lumber business. The Placerville paper carried this information:

In another column of this paper will be found the announcement of the Mariner-Snow lumber company, whose mills and yards are located seven miles east of Sly Park. They have recently added a lot of new and improved machinery to their mill, making the capacity 30,000 feet per day, thus enabling them to compete with any mill in filling all orders for lumber.<sup>53</sup>

The announcement referred to, advertises a full supply of sugar pine, spruce, cedar and fir lumber, with satisfaction guaranteed in quality and price.<sup>54</sup> A Snow lumber mill located in another area was lost by fire in 1931. The paper reported:

Fire of undetermined origin destroyed Snow's saw-mill, : located on Weber Creek on the cut-off road leading from Camino to Pleasant Valley, late Wednesday night ....<sup>55</sup>

Twenty-five years after Samuel Snow's death, his son Joseph, whose ranching included stock raising, paid tribute to his father's memory by registering as his cattle brand the initials I "SS," to be placed on the right hip of the animal.<sup>56</sup>

The first of the Snow sons to die was Joseph age 74.

After an illness ... Joseph Snow passed away at his home at Newtown last Saturday evening was a native of El Dorado County, having been born at Diamond Springs seventy-four years ago. The deceased was a well known mining man, farmer and stock raiser .... Funeral ... Tuesday from Masonic Temple in Placerville, under the auspices of Placerville Parlor No.9, Native Sons of the Golden West.<sup>57</sup>

Joseph was buried in the Snow plot in the Jewish cemetery in Placerville, the first son to join his parents there. His headstone reads: "Husband, Joseph Snow, 1851-1926. Rest in Peace."

Some years later, two of the brothers died within two; weeks of each other: Charles on September 20, 1932, and Herman on October 3, 1932. The first announcement read:

The funeral services for Charles Snow, 64, a native of Newtown, were held on Thursday morning .... Rabbi Norman Goldberg of Sacramento was in charge .... He had spent his life in the Newtown section, being engaged in ranching and mining.<sup>58</sup>

The second announcement, just a short time later:

Unreal services for Herman Snow, who died Monday morning at Newtown, were held on Wednesday afternoon" . . . Rabbi Goldberg of Sacramento, officiating .... Snow's death was the second in the family in recent weeks .... Herman Snow was 66 years old .... [He] spent his active life in mining and ranching.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Placerville Mountain Democrat*, July 16, 1892, p. t, c.3.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8, cs. 3-4

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, August 14, 1931, p. 1, c.2.

<sup>56</sup> El Dorado County, Brand Book, p. 201, date of registration: November 39, 1917.

<sup>57</sup> *Placerville Mountain Democrat*, March 19 1926, p. 8, c. 3.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* .. September 23, 1932, p. 2, c. 3. Charles was buried in the Jewish cemetery at Placerville. Samuel Davidson said that he brought Rabbi Norman Goldberg of Congregation B'Nai Israel, Sacramento, to Placerville, for both Charles' and Herman's funerals and was present at the interments in the Jewish cemetery. In a letter of March 10, 1970, Rabbi Goldberg, now in Augusta, Georgia, remembers his conversation with Emanuel Snow at the funerals and recalls Emanuel's pride in having been a "covered wagon baby" and a pioneer California settler.

One geographic remembrance of the Snows exists today in Dorado County. It is Snows Road, which runs through the old Snow ranch from Newtown to Camino, about nine miles east of Placerville. Samuel Davidson said that his uncles built the road as a short-cut across the country in the old days, when it was so steep that anyone going up it by horse and buggy, had get out and let the horse pull the empty rig. During the Depression years, the County bought land from the Snows in order that the road could be leveled and graded by the boys who worked in the Civilian Conservation Corps camps.

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Where are the Snows of yesteryear? As irretrievably gone as the winter drifts upon the foothills when the July sun blazes down upon the dry grass. But in the memories of their descendants, in the brittle pages of a scrapbook, in old newspapers, in books about the early days, they can be brought to life again and again. Their old-fashioned virtues, their strong characters, their good names, their eager acceptance of work as a way life, are a continuing source of pride to all of us.

A most familiar and frequently bestowed Jewish blessing confers on the one blessed a lifetime of one hundred and twenty years. In this year of 1970, one hundred and twenty years have passed since Samuel Sussman Snow arrived in California, the land of gold and of milk and honey. Perhaps, as we recount his life's story and look back with admiration at his achievements, the blessing, for him, has been fulfilled.

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<sup>59</sup> Placerville Mountain Democrat, October 7, 1932. p. 8. C. 4. No headstones were placed on the graves for these two 1932 burials. The graves are unmarked, but both Charles and Herman lie in the Snow plot. As Samuel Davidson said that one of the Snow sons was buried in the Placerville Catholic Cemetery, it is probably Jacob, who died October 1, 1939

