

## **Historical Articles of Solano County**

**Monday, June 12, 2000**

### **Towns vanished when railroad passed them by**

**Jerry Bowen**

I have always been fascinated by old maps and the potential stories they reveal. My thanks to James Davis for a suggestion about the town of Cement, which became the catalyst of this series of articles.

Silveyville

North of Vacaville and west of Dixon is the site of Silveyville. The town began its life in 1852 as a halfway house-hotel on the old Sacramento Road midway between Benicia and Sacramento. Elijah Silvey, for whom the town is named, migrated to California from Missouri in 1849 with his wife and two children.

Silvey built a corral and hotel on land he bought in 1850, hung a red lantern on a tall pole to attract weary travelers and he was in business.

A post office was established in 1853 and the infant township was named "Putah." Because the word "Putah" was so similar to the Spanish word for harlot, "puta," the name was changed to Silveyville in 1856.

That same year, George Gillespie established a store, and a year later Simmons and Long built a two-story saloon. Patrons were known to whoop it up on Saturday night in the saloon on the bottom floor, then piously attend church on Sunday morning on the upper floor.

Soon the growing community of Silveyville had a blacksmith shop, a telegraph office and a newspaper.

The editor of the newspaper was a strongly opinionated Democrat. He soon crossed swords with a similarly opinionated Union man, Dr. J.C. Ogburn. He shot and killed Ogburn and quickly left the country.

With the establishment of Presbyterian and Baptist churches in 1861 and a Methodist church in 1866, the town's future was looking up (so to speak).

But Silveyville's days were numbered. As so often happened in those early days, the railroad bypassed it, laying its tracks on land donated by Thomas Dickson about three miles east of the town. Here, the community of Dixon, the name was a result of misspelling Dickson's name on the railroad depot sign, - began to grow. Most of Silveyville's buildings were then moved to the new town of Dixon.

The Methodist Church is the only Silveyville building to survive a major fire in 1883 which destroyed most of Dixon. It is interesting to note that its survival was due to the fact that it was too large to cross the railroad tracks, so it was positioned away from the other structures in town and is still in use today.

Today Dixon flourishes but Silveyville has one home built in 1873 by Joachim Schroeder, still inhabited by descendants, and the recently erected Pony Express monument on the corner of Silveyville and Schroeder Roads.