

Volume 7

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SAN JOSE'S CHINESE

Arthur M. Fisk

(Thanks are extended to Ralph Rambo, Clyde Arbuckle and Robert Nelson who assisted in the material for this article.)

The first Chinese came to Santa Clara Valley in the early 1850's to do housework, work on farms, cook for the hay baling crews and other menial labor.

After the gold rush they continued to pour into San Jose, but were viciously persecuted by the Americans, and by 1854 were forced to group together for protection. The first Chinese settlement was near the present Park Avenue along the east bank of the Guadalupe River. Later they moved into some old buildings along Market Street near San Fernando. In 1887 Chinatown burned to the ground. It was said to be incendiary.

After the big fire of 1887 rival factions split the Chinese population and two communities were set up. One group set up housekeeping on the east bank of the Guadalupe River near what is now West Taylor Street and the other group moved to Heinlenville, which was built by John Heinlen between Sixth and Seventh streets and Taylor and Jackson streets. Later it extended along Jackson to Fourth Street.

During the last decade of the 19th century San Jose's Chinatown thrived and a handsome two story Joss House was built, where the Chinese worshipped their Gods before the beautiful hand carved altar. At the turn of the century they boasted of a population of some 4,000, the second largest Chinatown in the country. (The Joss House was torn down in 1949, but the altar has been saved for posterity.)

An enterprising Chinese named Chung Kee started an employment agency where farmers and others could hire Chinese labor for any kind of work. Chung Kee collected ten per cent of whatever they earned for his commission, and became quite wealthy.

They worked ten hours a day for \$1.50, lived well on it and had money for Tong dues, their burial society and of course the Chinese lottery. The Chinese never walked two abreast, but according to ancient tradition always walked single file the better to protect themselves if attacked by hostile tong members.

The turn of the century Chinese wore a black cotton blouse fastened with small loops and extending down below the hips. The pantaloons were made of the same material reaching down to the ankles. His hat was wide brimmed with a high crown, usually made of split bamboo. The queue (pigtail) was his badge of respect, which he cherished greatly and wore coiled and concealed in the crown of his hat, except when with his own people he let it hang down his back.

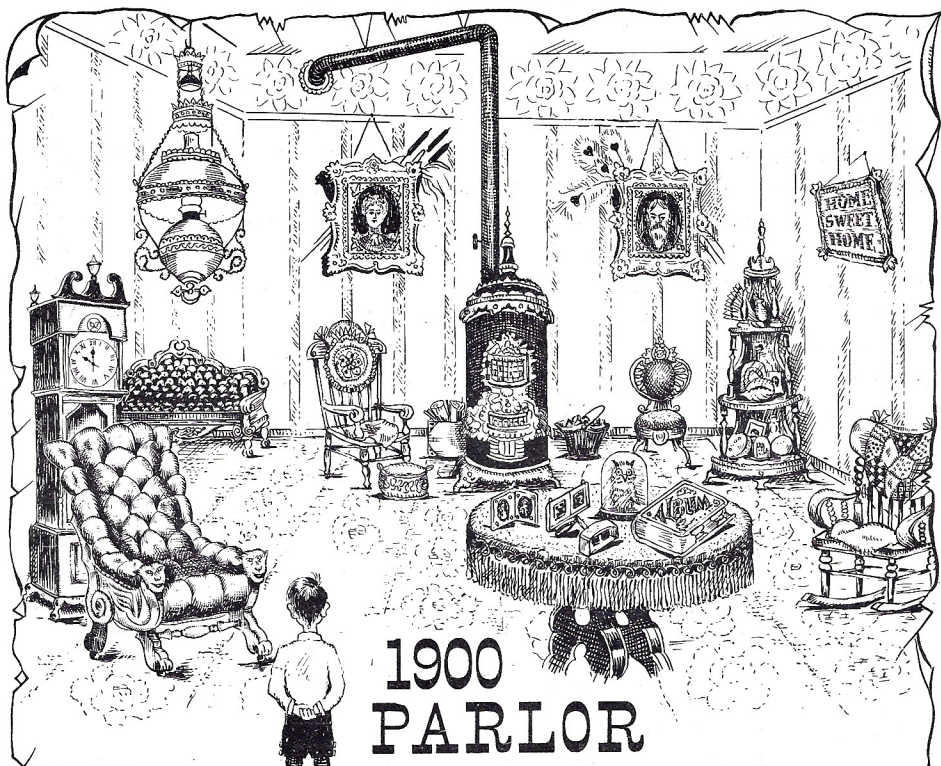
The strange odors from the stores were somewhat frightening, especially at the fish market where the flies came in for their daily feast, but despite the odors of Chinatown the litchi-nuts, sliced sugared coconut, ginger and dried melon were always welcomed gifts when you went to the Chinese laundry for the weekly wash.

A Chinese funeral was quite a fascinating event. If the surviving relatives were wealthy enough they would hire a brass band to lead the funeral procession to the cemetery. The mourners scattered perforated papers along the route to keep the evil spirits from catching up with the body, as they had to pass through each perforation in the papers, which delayed their progress. When the deceased passed through the gate at the cemetery a volley of clashing cymbals and gongs scared the wits out of the remaining devils.

In the Oriental section of Oak Hill Cemetery a brick altar had been erected where offerings could be made, such as a small roast pig and other delicacies to give the departing spirit strength enough to reach his ancestors. The Chinese section was located west of the Chapel of Roses, now overgrown with weeds and brush.

The busy Chinatown that we knew along Jackson Street during the early part of the 20th century has gradually been obliterated and faded into oblivion.

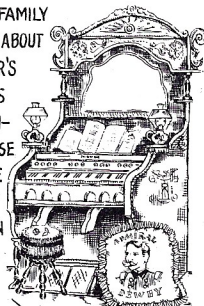
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1900 PARLOR

WITH THE EARLY SETTLERS IN SANTA CLARA VALLEY CAME THEIR MIDWESTERN PARLOR. FOR OUR YOUNGER GENERATION THE BEST DEFINITION OF A PARLOR IS TO SAY IT WAS EXACT OPPOSITE OF TODAY'S RUMPUS ROOM. IT WAS A PLACE OF DIGNITY WITH BLINDS PULLED DURING THE WEEK, RAISED ONLY TO BROOM-SWEEP OR FEATHER DUST. THIS OPERATION SIMPLY MOVED DUST FROM ONE LOCATION TO ANOTHER AND LEFT A STRANGE, SOLEMN, FUNERAL ODOUR, (AND FOR SUCH OCCASIONS OUR PARLOR WAS SO USED).....ON THE OTHER HAND, THE ROOM HELD JOYOUS SCENES SUCH AS WEDDINGS, RELATIVE REUNIONS, SUNDAY VISITORS AND CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS.....IT WAS THE FAMILY MUSEUM, "WHATNOT" AS CENTERPIECE.....THIS MIGHT DISPLAY AN OSTRICH EGG, BABY SHOE, SHARK'S TOOTH, SEA SHELL CONTAINING ALLEGED OCEAN ROAR, STUFFED BIRD, TINTYPES

OF BUG-EYED RELATIVES AND GLASS DOMED CASE WITH A LOCK OF AUNT MARY'S CURLS. ALWAYS A PAIR OF EITHER KINDLY OR CRITICAL ANCESTORS LOOKED DOWN UPON US FROM THEIR ENORMOUS FRAMES. A VISIT COULD BE LIGHTENED BY A ROUND WITH THE STEREOSCOPE AND LATEST SLIDES OF DEWEY'S FLEET OR THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR. THE FAMILY ALBUM WAS LAST RESORT AND ABOUT AS EXCITING AS LAST YEAR'S ALMANAC. WE YOUNGSTERS AVOIDED THE LEATHER FURNITURE WITH STABBING HORSE HAIR. YET SOMEHOW I BELIEVE OUR ANCESTORS WOULD ENJOY A MODERN LIVING ROOM, EVEN A FEW WHO WOULD GO FOR THE RUMPUS ROOM!



RAMBO 64

(This is a reduction of page 25, appearing in Almost Forgotten. Permission to use is granted by the author F. Ralph Rambo.)

CIRCUS COMES TO TOWN

Marjorie B. Fisk

At the turn of the century the circus coming to town was big news and it spread rapidly in Santa Clara Valley.

Conversation held all who spoke or listened. Famous names of circus owners were heard. Such names as Al G. Barnes, Yankee Robinson, Adam Forepaugh, Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey, Sells and Downs (later Sells-Floto), Hagenbeck, Al Bostwick and a host of others highlighted the bits of information passed along.

Circus Day finally came! The long whine of the whistle on the northbound steam locomotive with its string of stock cars, flats and sleeping cars, warned the welcoming crowd of local 'teen agers that the great moment had arrived.

Along the tracks in the freight yards the group waited, quivering not only from the cool early morning air, but perhaps with a quiver of hope that maybe an elephant would tear away, head for down town and run amuck!

The engine ground to a halt. The Circus Trainmaster stepped off the coach and the onlookers witnessed genuine team work speedily accomplished by the light of torches and kerosene lanterns.

Roustabouts moved animal cages on wagons close to the cars. Trainers drove their charges into the cages. Elephants lined up, ready to move. An army of employees left with heavy canvas tents and poles for the circus grounds west of The Alameda.

The head man called out to the eager group of youngsters. "We need help watering the animals, 'specially the elephants. Any boy who'll help gets a free pass to the big show, and I'll give you a ticket to see the Wild Man from Borneo and his cobras and boa constrictors!"

Small faces grinned in the darkness. Youthful legs carried the volunteers north along The Alameda to the wide opening in the fence at the circus grounds. Sunrise was showing above the eastern foothills when panting boys loped into their home kitchens, where mothers were serving family breakfasts.

Ten o'clock saw the scarlet uniformed band in the high gold wagon drawn by six black horses, heading a long string of wild animal cages on wheels, camels, elephants, clowns, gorgeous equestriennes on prancing steeds, and the usual vehicles carrying trapeze artists.

One entry caused consternation among the cluster of youngsters. Perched high, cross legged on the head of

the lead elephant, rode a brown skinned Mahout, clad only in a breach clout and a white turban. "Look at that fellow," George jerked a thumb toward the Mahout. "He oughta be ashamed! Wearin' only a rag around his head and a diaper, 'stead of pants!"

Piercing shrieks sounded from the final unit in the parade. Wreathed in puffs of steam the calliope blasted the aid with "There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight" as listeners clapped hands over their ears to shield the ear drums from the sound.

Mothers collected the small dry, taking them away from the crackerjack and sarsaparilla, and herding them toward waiting carriages, hoping to get everyone back for the noon meal.

On the circus grounds, customers swarmed around the sideshows and concessions. Several free shows enticed patrons, by aid of barkers. A minstrel show cake walk performance brought applause, followed by a young woman's rendition of the latest song:

"Lindy! Lindy! Sweeter than sugar cane,

Lindy! Lindy! Say you'll be mine,

When the moon am shinin'

An' my heart am pinin'

Meet me pretty Lindy, by the water melon vine."

The beat of a tom-tom heralded the male crowd to the free show held in front of the tent where the Hoochie-Koochie belly dancers would perform. Only male adults were allowed inside. No lady had ever turned her glance toward the entrance.

The wild man from Borneo was a genuine disappointment. "There's something funny 'bout him," Henry insisted. "He grunted and spit at us. An' I never seen such blue eyes! He looks exactly like the fellow who sold balloons down town when we was at the parade!"

George agreed. "You know what? Them snakes he was wearin' round hissself wasn't cobras or boa constrictors. They was gopher snakes! I know. I got a pet gopher snake name of Clarence, an' Clarence ain't got any poison in him, not so much as an angle worm!"

Band music sounded inside the main tent, and as one person the crowd flowed inside.

Once more, faces turned to view the grand entrance of a parade of animals, performers and rollicking clowns. Every moment brought heavy applause throughout the afternoon. People lived an afternoon of enjoyment that was to be recalled throughout the years.

So it remains. The old time tent circus has faded into oblivion. No more childish efforts at putting on side shows in some barn loft, admission five pins. But memories do cling.

Even today, now and then, evidence of early day tent shows is found where the old circus grounds used to be west of The Alameda. A large collection of old time soda pop bottles, the old fashioned sort, with heavy wire clamps to hold the bottle caps tight, were dug up in the garden of your editors, on Singletary Avenue. All the bottles were broken. A metal token inscribed "Good for one five cent loaf of Father's Bread" also came to light, and a huge imitation topaz and brass earring of the dangle variety told plainly that hereabouts must have stood the tent of the Hoochie-Koochie dancers.

The BIG TOP is missing, and the sawdust floor is gone, but we can remember as the years roll on, "The Circus did come to town!"

* * *

AGRICULTURAL PARK

Donald Tustin

(The following item is from the files of the late John L. Tustin, Donald's father.)

Agricultural Park enclosed by a high board fence extended along Race Street and The Alameda with the main gate opposite the end of West Santa Clara Street as it turned into The Alameda. Here was located horse and bicycle tracks, picnic and barbeque grounds and the Rose Pavilion. Conveniently located, across The Alameda was the turreted brick walled Fredericksburg Brewery.

Here was the focal point of Sunday excursions arriving at the West Side depot over the broad gauge from San Francisco and the narrow gauge from Alameda and the east bay. The Palace Gardens on The Alameda, was the stop-over place for refreshments on the way to the Park. One Sunday an error was made in reservations. The Teamsters Union from Oakland arrived to find the Butchers Union from San Francisco occupying the picnic tables. There was only room for one group. Local youngsters scrambled to the top of the fence and enjoyed the battle.

These train excursions were a bonanza for the kids who stripped neighboring yards of bright flowers, made them into small bouquets for sale to the well conditioned men and their girl friends as they returned to the trains.

* * *

THE SALVATION ARMY

Leo Sullivan

(With appreciation to Henry Stillwell and the Salvation Army Community Center, 359 No. 4th Street.)

William Booth (1829-1912), a British preacher, founded the Salvation Army in London about 1850. Organized for the promotion of good will, friendship and charity among all men regardless of creed, color, country or race.

Booth's "Army" proved successful and following the course of history continued Westward, making its appearance in the New World a decade later.

Ballinger Booth, a son of Britisher, William Booth, had emigrated to the United States some years earlier and meanwhile had organized an American version of "The Army" naming it "The Volunteers of America."

The forces of the Father, William Booth and son, Ballinger, were evidently co-ordinated, for in the '90's, when the writer was a boy, the names "Salvation Army" and "Volunteers of America" were used synonymously.

The struggles and trials of "The Army" and "The Volunteers" in their progress across the Continent are obscure, but the archives of San Jose Army's Community Center reveal a Captain Henry Stillwell started a Salvation Army Post locally as early as 1883--most likely the first Commandery on the Pacific Coast.

(Don Stillwell, a grandson of the founder, Captain Henry Stillwell, is a citizen of Santa Clara Valley, holding the position of Dean of Boys at Campbell Westmont High. Stillwell is also athletically inclined and acts as Football Coach at the same institution.)

In the good old days the South-west corner of Market and Santa Clara streets by priority, was reserved for the Salvation Army. About 7:30 P.M., rain or shine, these dedicated "Soldiers of The Lord" assembled, in regulation uniforms, in front of the old "Tower Saloon", opposite what was then known as "Hart's New Corner Cash Store."

The non-sectarian group sang hymns interspersed with fervent "hallelujahs", speakers exhorted, pleaded and assured "down and outers" that, "regardless of the enormity of their sins and transgressions, or how low they may have sunk in the mire of human corruption, there was always a chance for salvation, and an escape from the labyrinth of evil, by sincere repentance and returning to God and The Fold."

The Bass Drum, in the center of the ring, acted as

a depository for coins donated by spectators. Charmingly bonneted Lassies then solicited funds.

The Commander in closing, suggested the indoor Prayer Meeting to follow at their Hall could be helpful to many.

Led by the Band, composed of a cornet, alto horn, baritone, bass drum and tinkling tambourines, the consecrated little group then marched gayly down Market Street, to the strains of "Onward Christian Soldiers", as far as El Dorado (now Post Street) then turning left to their hall in the Columbus Building over "Hommerich's" Sporting Goods Store and opposite "Mignola's Cutlery Shop."

(Hommerich's Sporting Goods, or "gun store" has long since fallen a victim of the "March of Time".)

(Mignola's Cutlery is now located at 37 So. Market.)

The Salvation Army's, then, new pretentious home was erected on West San Fernando Street near Locust in the 1920's, next to Chiappi's Grocery Store.

The Army has grown to large proportions, having many outlets and local activities--the Main Corps and Community Center is presently located at 359 North 4th Street, on the site of what was formerly the old "Golden Gate Packing Company" managed by Elmer Chase a prominent and active member of the local Antlered Herd, Elk's Lodge #522, now housed in its magnificent new home at 444 West Alma Street.

(Elmer Chase was also a partner of the Richmond and Chase Canning Company on Stockton Avenue.)

* * *

CONTRIBUTIONS LEGALIZED

Theron Fox

(Mr. Fox is President of the San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission.)

The San Jose City Museum will benefit to the amount of about \$15,000 in cash through the generosity and thoughtfulness of the late Elizabeth Madison Braly, who passed away in Pasadena last February.

Miss Braly, a native of Santa Clara County, was a neice of Dr. Benjamin Cory, pioneer San Jose physician. Although she had not lived in this area for many years, she was a frequent visitor and contributor to the museum.

For a time it seemed that her wishes might not be fulfilled. Miss Braly's will was several years old, and she had attached a codicil to it bequeathing her home

jointly to a family friend and the museum. However, the Los Angeles County Court after deliberation recognized the instrument.

Similar cases have not always proven so fortunate. Many people express the desire to make such gifts, but fail to make legal mention and protection of the intent in their wills. It is then practically impossible to secure the gift.

Those who wish to make gifts of this kind should see their attorney and make proper provision for it without delay. The gifts do not necessarily have to be real property or cash, as artifacts, diaries, photographs and libraries all fall into the group of much needed material that are often lost because proper plans were not made before death.

This procedure applies to all organizations, including the museum, lodges, benevolent homes or churches.

* * *

By-lines from the President
Jessie E. Black

I had the honor and privilege of representing our Society at the annual conference of Historical Societies at Oroville in June. I met so many nice people, heard some wonderful and instructive talks on California history and saw some very interesting things.

The Oroville Society has a very nice museum. Rooms well arranged and many artifacts of interest to all.

I also had the privilege of going to the old Chinese "Josh House" or temple which was built in 1856. At one time Oroville had the largest Chinatown outside China, with some 10,000 people. The Temple is very interesting with many of the original prayer boards and idols.

Oroville is also very fortunate in that a family by the name of Lott gave their home to the city (built in 1856), together with a square block of land. The original furnishings were not included at the time of the gift, but many of them have been returned by members of the family, and many more have been donated. It is a very attractive place and well worth a visit.

I hope you all had a very nice Summer and that you may be able to join with us at our Christmas luncheon on December 2nd. We plan to have some good Christmas entertainment and will also honor our members who are 85 YEARS or OLDER. Merry Christmas to you all.

* * *

LOOK FOR IT HERE

A new book "Dick Barrett '66" is on sale at most book stores for \$2. It deals with local historical material from Barrett's Sunday column and would make an interesting Christmas Gift. An autograph party will be held Saturday, October 14th from 2 to 4 p.m. at the new Santa Clara Library at 2635 Homestead Road, Santa Clara.

Ralph Rambo does it again, No. 2 of his Pioneer Series, "Lo, the poor Indian." It is now on sale at Books Inc. and other stores. It is the history of the Indians of Santa Clara Valley, something that has been avoided by historians because of the lack of authoritative material. This booklet would be an excellent textbook for our elementary schools. ***

Ground breaking for the new \$4 million Monta Vista High School was held August 3rd. The campus is located along McClellan Road, which was the site of the Spanish De Anza expedition of 1776. ***

Here's an old time recipe for Louis Lassabatere: "Johnnycakes" -- 1 cup cornmeal, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sifted flour, 2 tablespoons sugar, $1\frac{1}{2}$ teas. baking powder, 1 teas. salt, 1 egg beaten, $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups milk. Sift together corn meal, flour, sugar, baking powder, salt. Add beaten egg and milk, blend. For each Johnnycake pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter onto hot, lightly greased griddle, bake to a golden brown. ***

Miss Louise Girdler became our 1,000th member June 12, 1967. We now have a membership of 1013. ***

The mistakes made in the Trailblazer belong to the editor. We try to print something for everybody, so the errors that appear are for the benefit of those who always look for them. ***

The fire in Jamestown last winter burned down several historic buildings of the gold rush era. I lived Jamestown 1899 to March 1901 when we moved to Sonoma. I recall it as a very busy community. The Sierra Railroad shops were located there, also the terminal for the Yosemite Valley Stagecoach Co. The beautiful Hotel Nevills stood just north of the R.R. station. It was a two-story structure with Chinese architectural lines, and noted as one of the best in the west. It was destroyed by fire in 1915. Subsequent fires have almost obliterated Jamestown (Jimtown). Editor ***

* * *

WELCOME

Congratulations to our new members: Blanche Adams, Pansy D. Adams, Rose Baker, Trella Carraher, Catherine V.

Cirese, Joseph M. Cirese, Grace A. Frizzell, Pearl K. Gibson, Viola Himmel, Ida Karsten, Bert T. Kirk, Evelyn G. Kirk, May K. Kirk, Florence Koehle, Nella E. Lamb, Elizabeth Mahon, Elsa T. McKee, Frank H. McKee, Ann Petersen, Gertrude M. Rhea, Harry D. Rhea, Christine Rose, Seymour T. Rose, Florence Rifenbark, Alma K. Rockwell, Lloyd J. Rodey, Josephine Seidl, Ethel Stewart, Carmen E. Thomas, Mary Walter, Florence G. Whidden, Helen L. Williamson.

* * *

UNDER THE WEATHER

Mrs. Evelyn R. Sloan, Mrs. Nina M. Smith, Miss Helen Mignon, Mr. Lewis Morden and Mrs. Laura E. Friesen have been reported ill. Our very best wishes for a rapid recovery are sincerely extended.

* * *

BEYOND THE SUNSET

Ethel B. Donovan

January 6, 1886 - June 26, 1967

Beulah M. Martin

- June 26, 1967

Almer W. Laederich Sr.

February 16, 1891 - July 15, 1967

Margaret H. Hubbard

June 27, 1887 - July 24, 1967

Della A. Montgomery

November 14, 1877 - August 16, 1967

Jessie May Griswold

January 21, 1883 - August 22, 1967

Una Payne Hughson

April 19, 1878 - September 3, 1967

In behalf of the officers and members of the California Pioneer Society of Santa Clara County, the TRAIL-BLAZER extends their sincere sympathy to the relatives and friends of our departed members.

THE TRAILBLAZER

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Staff members: Olin and Edna Lake

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* * *

THE SOCIAL CLUB of our society meets on the 1st and 3rd Monday afternoon of each month. Card playing and various activities highlight each meeting. For further information call Mrs. Kate L. Owen, 295-1153.

BUS TOUR information for members of the Pioneer Society may be obtained from Miss Gertrude A. Bernhardt, phone 293-3087.

PIONEER SCRAP BOOK items may be sent to Mrs. Elsa Jensen, 520 Bradley Ave., San Jose, Calif. 95128.

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