

CALIFORNIA PIONEERS OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

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Introduction:

This essay is about my family's experience with some early settlers in Santa Clara County.

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Our family moved to Santa Clara County in 1953. Sharon was born and raised in Oakland, CA and Don was born and raised in Iowa. We met and married in the service during W.W II. When Don got a job in June of 1953 working for Libby, McNeill & Libby, a Sunnyvale cannery established in Sunnyvale in 1906, we moved to Sunnyvale. We lived in an apartment near El Camino & Bernardo on Parkington Avenue in Sunnyvale. Our plan was to live here and get settled and then eventually buy a home – no rush.

Well, we weren't in that apartment for a week when every night when Don would get home from work, Sharon would say "I really found just the right house for us today". We hadn't been in Sunnyvale for a month when Sharon found a lot near Fallen Leaf Lane and Fremont Avenue. The lot she liked, and we bought, was backed up on the west side of Stevens Creek [the creek not the road] just south of Fremont Avenue. At that time this area was in just the county, it later was annexed into Los Altos.

Now here's where the old time part of this county comes into play for us.

As we said above, our lot was backed up to Stevens Creek some 30 or 40 feet from the high ground of the actual creek [top bank of the creek]. This strip of land was owned by a fellow named Losse. As we were anxious to purchase this strip of land in order to have more of a back yard and enough room to later add a garage, we made Mr. Losse an offer and he accepted. In making this purchase we had many an interesting visit with Mr. Losse. We'd now like to share a few of the "old time" memories he told us with you. Before 1900 Mr. Losse's dad had started a bank in the city of Santa Clara. It was called, quite appropriately, Santa Clara Bank. Mr. Losse told us his dad eventually sold this.

successful bank to A.P.Giannini. This sale was a stepping stone in Mr. Giannini building what was then his Bank of Italy into what was to become Bank of America.

When Mr. Losse was young his family had a ranch [500 acres] at Bernardo and El Camino. The reason Mr. Losse owned the land, we were interested in purchasing behind our new home, was so they could dam Stevens Creek at Morton Avenue [Los Altos side] and irrigate their acreage via a ditch along the high ground parallel to the creek. Not only did they irrigate their own land through this ditch and other ditches like it along the creek but they also sold water to other orchardists down stream from their dam.

Don has a good friend, Bob Popovich, from their Libby canning days. Bob can remember his dad buying water from Mr. Losse's dad to irrigate their prune and apricot orchard on Bryant Avenue in Mountain View. Bob said his dad paid Mr. Losse one dollar an hour for all the water he could use to irrigate his orchard.

Speaking of money, we should tell you Mr. Losse sold us the land behind our house for \$250.00. As there was nearly an acre of land involved in this purchase, you can see that was a good buy even in those days. Orchard land in Santa Clara valley at that time was selling for around \$3,500.00 per acre.

In our relating tales told to us by Mr. Losse for this publication, we recall one he told of his youth. When he was around 10 or so years old, we'd estimate that to be around 1885, he lived on Stockton Avenue in San Jose. He could remember vividly how on hot weekend days, in the summer time – no doubt, he and his friends would hear the train from Oakland, taking people to the Santa Cruz beach for the day, coming by the back yard of his home. They would get a long stick and go down to the tracks and as the train slowly wound through town the boys would knock the big stove pipe hats off the passengers that

were sticking their heads out the window – to keep cool, no doubt. We could still see, in Mr. Losse's eyes, the thrill he had when he told us of that experience. Can you imagine the frustration of those passengers losing their Sunday go to meeting hat in this manner. Another favorite Mr. Losse story was of his first car. When he graduated, early in the 1900's his dad bought him a Dusenburg roadster for \$3500.00. That was a lot of money in those days. Oh, by the way, he told us with pride, this car would do 35 miles an hour and could pass everything on the road.

What brought these thoughts of Mr. Losse up to us was the article in the March issue of S.H.S. newsletter about the Delmas family. Mr. Losse told us his dad bought their 500 acre tract of land, mentioned before, from Mr. Delmas who owned 1000 acres in the Bernardo and El Camino area of what is now Sunnyvale and Mountain View. And yes Mr. Losse did tell us that Mr. Delmas was a very successful lawyer, as was mentioned in the S.H.S. article. Isn't our valley a historical wonder.

Thank you for letting us share a few moments from our lives with you.