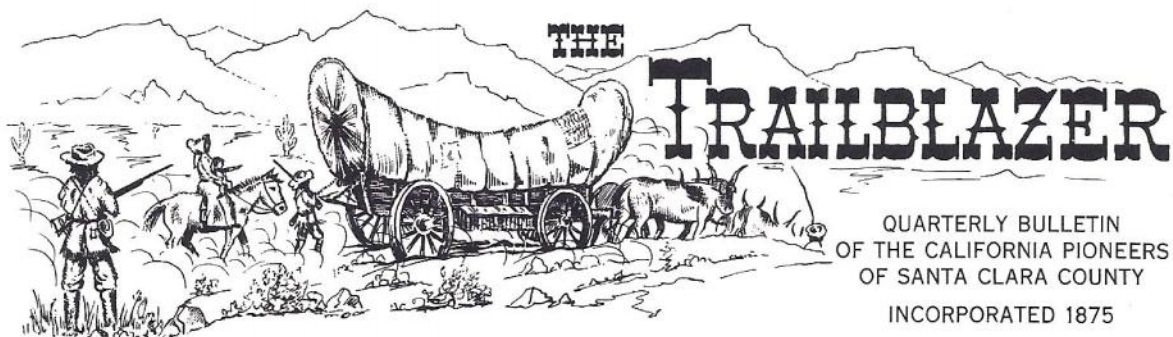


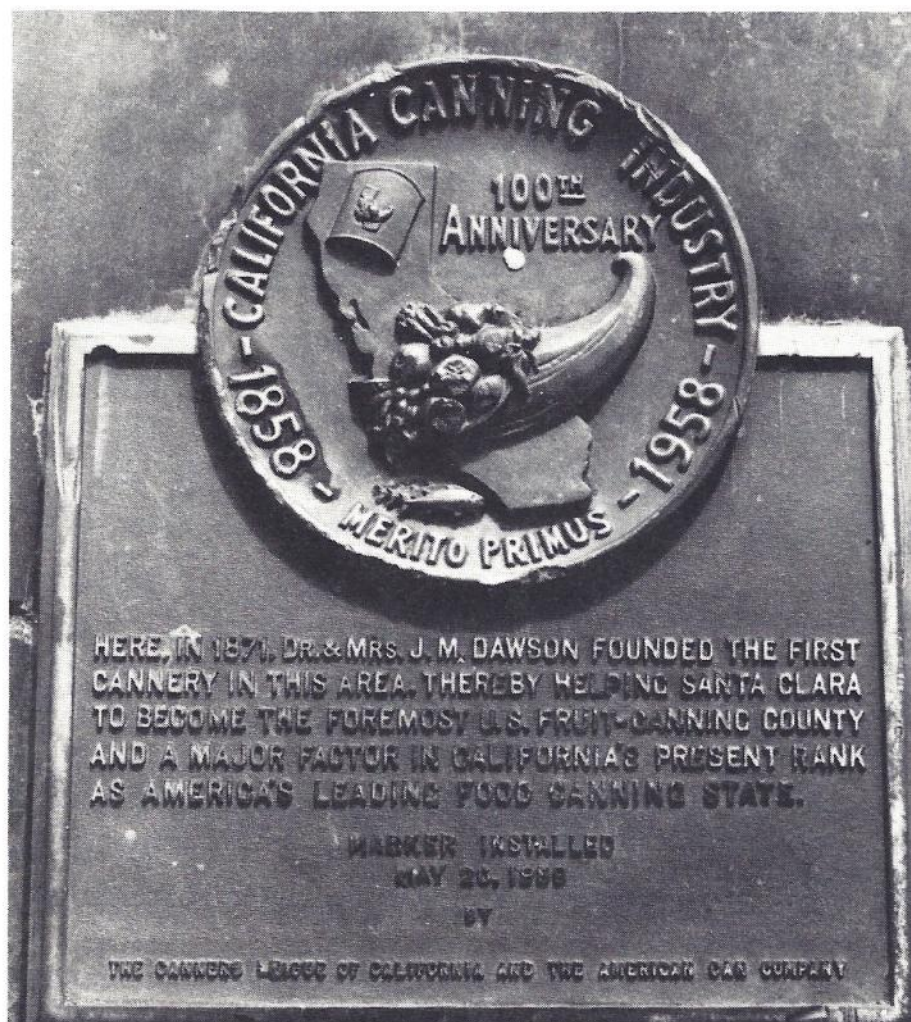


QUARTERLY BULLETIN
OF THE CALIFORNIA PIONEERS
OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY
INCORPORATED 1875

Volume 19

May 1979

Number 2



Plaque Honors Santa Clara Valley's Canning Industry and First Cannery Site

The Alameda at West Taylor, San Jose

WHALE BLAZERS

1894 — Homemaking Assists

“Oyster juice is a perfect cleanser of linen from fruit and wine stains.”

“Fresh ground coffee sprinkled on a shovel of hot coals makes an agreeable disinfectant — vinegar boiled with myrrh sprinkled on the floor and furniture of a sickroom is an excellent deodorizer.”

“If the rollers of a wringer are sticky or covered with lint, pass a cloth dampened with kerosene between them.”

San Jose, June 1901 — Hello Girls Made Happy

The Sunset Telephone Co. announced their telephone girls were to receive an increase in salary ranging from two to four dollars a month. For the 65 telephone operators in San Jose, this was good news.

San Jose, March 1902

A baseball club was organized by the clerks in Wenples Grocery Store calling themselves “Wenple Grocery Growers.” They challenged any other team doing a business in the county. It was noted a cask of liniment had been ordered by the club’s secretary.

San Jose, May 1902

The Executive Board of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County appointed a special committee of five to organize a choir in the society to furnish music for funerals and other occasions.

May 1909 — Ostrich Farm Lays Egg

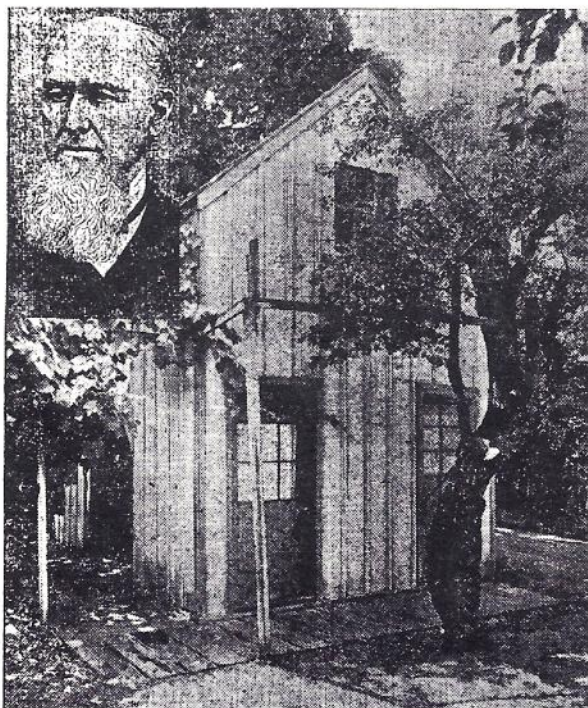
After six years of ostrich farming, San Jose lost its enterprise to Sacramento. Colwell Leitch, owner-manager decided on the move due to a handsome offer.

Leitch came to San Jose from Arizona in 1903 and shortly started the plume farm near Alum Rock and King Road after encouragement from the San Jose and Santa Clara County Railroads.

On May 24, 1909 Leitch arranged for the transportation of his flock of 24 birds and a large number of eggs.

The ostrich farm was a show place of San Jose during its stay here, going on to become an asset for the city of Sacramento.

CANNERY ROW 1871



Where the Fruit Cannery Industry of Santa Clara Valley Had its Beginnings

The following is an interview extended to the San Jose Mercury Herald by Mrs. James M. Dawson who with her husband had canned the first fruit in this section of the state in 1871.

Dr. James M. Dawson and his 12' X 16' cannery as it appeared in 1910 at 1370 The Alameda

"In those early days the valley represented an entirely different view than at present and the orchards were few and far between. There were no trees of any kind between our home and Alviso. No homes were beyond us towards the slough section and the entire territory intervening was all in wheat. I remember," she continued in a reminiscent way, "how the water willows that had been planted by the padres stretched so beautifully along The Alameda. They occupied the center of the pleasant way and on the north side of this roadway ran Bishop's horsecar line.

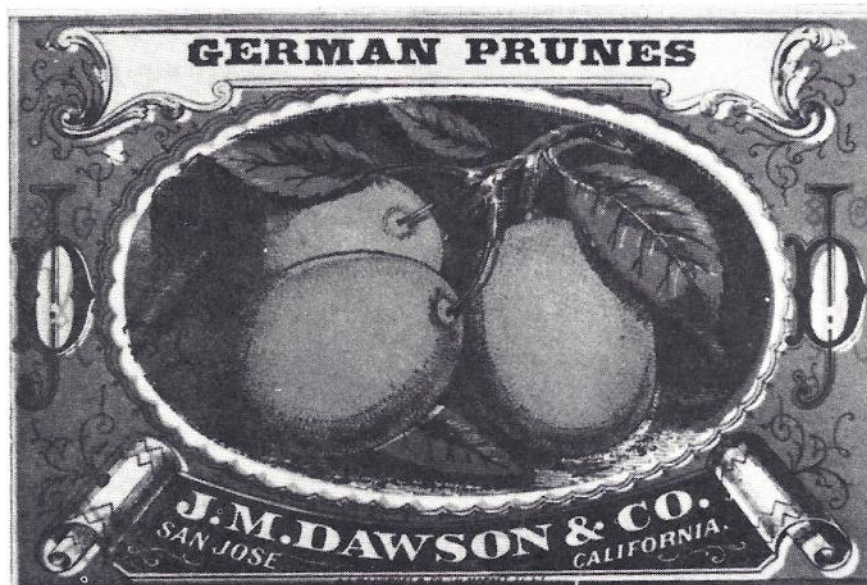
This was the appearance of the situation when Dr. Dawson conceived the idea of engaging in the fruit canning business. As you may realize I was somewhat younger than now and having the ambition of the pioneer, assisted in the enterprise with my every effort.

We purchased an ordinary kitchen range on which to heat the fruits before placing them in cans. The pack consisted mostly of 'cots' and peaches which we purchased in small lots in driving about the valley. We bought the cans from Mr. Cambell's tin shop in town and our first year's output was readily disposed of in San Jose."

Mrs. Dawson related with much interest how she made frequent trips to San Francisco to pursue better ways of preparing labels for their can pack.

"In 1874 we decided to increase our facilities by erecting a second building with a frontage on Myrtle St. In order to secure better drainage the base of operations was at a later date changed to Montgomery and Lenzen Streets.

The business had grown to big proportions," continued Mrs. Dawson, "and was subsequently incorporated as the J. M. Dawson Packing Co. under which title we conducted it until 1894 when the plant was destroyed by a fire. Almost one million cans of fruit were lost, bringing a loss of about \$80,000 to the company."



San Jose Historical Museum

The Dawson Company was the original of the San Jose Fruit Packing Co. The eastern market had learned of the superiority of the fruit canned by the Dawson Company, and from a pack of 350 cases in 1871 the output increased to 140,000 cases in 1886, at which time about three hundred to five hundred employees were on the payroll.

Dr. James M. Dawson passed away prior to the plant's fire. A son, E. L. Dawson, left San Jose for Chicago to act as the Western Manager of the Fruit Canners Association. Other members of the family no longer engaged themselves with the operation and the Dawson Cannery, which was the foundation of one of California's greatest industries, had passed into history.



THE BAY SIDE CANNING CO., ALVISO, CALIF.

The Trailblazer is grateful to Mrs. Mary Simas of Morgan Hill, who was employed by Bay Side in 1925, for making available the following account by Mr. James R. Chew of Stockton. Mr. Chew is the grandson of Sai Yin Chew, founder of the Precita Canning Co. in San Francisco in 1890. This was the forerunner of the Bay Side Canning Co. of Alviso.

The Precita Canning Co., at Broadway and Sansome Streets, San Francisco, was founded about 1890 by Sai Yin Chew (father of Thomas Foon Chew). Officials and the board of directors were all of Chinese ancestry.

After the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906, the Precita Canning Co. moved to Alviso and reorganized under the name of Bay Side Canning Co.

The company rented the Alviso Watch Factory building and later bought the premises. Surrounding land was bought to build warehouses, cabins and boarding houses for the laborers. A two story building was built to house 100 Chinese laborers who came from the San Francisco Bay area. Room and board with three full meals a day were \$2.50 per week.

The workers started arriving at the beginning of the fruit harvest and worked until the end of the canning season. The majority of the cannery workers were women. Some would come and live in the cabins and there were others who preferred to commute daily. Crude hard tire buses were used to bring women to work every day and would take them home every evening. The women workers came from Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Milpitas and surrounding areas.

At that time there were no workers' unions to protect the laborers. A work day started at 6:00 a.m. and ended when all products were processed for the day regardless of the hours of work or time of night to complete processing. Sundays and holidays were not observed. The pay rates coincided with the industry which at the time was from 17½¢ to 37½¢ per hour with no overtime. Some women were paid on piece work rate, such as stemming and pitting cherries, cutting and pitting peaches, peeling, coring and stemming bartlett pears for 25¢ per 60 lbs. lug box of fruit.



From the collection of Ralph Rambo who designed rosy-cheeked fruit labels for Tom Foon Chew's prime fruit pack.

The Bay Side Canning Co. plant at Alviso started operation in the early days with primitive canning methods and equipment, of which most was hand made. Steam was supplied by old Donkey Type boilers; open vats were used in exhausting and cooking of fruits and vegetables. Hand seamers and hand soldering were used in finishing the processed foods.

Later more modern methods and commercial equipment were used. The Alviso plant was the first to use the press method of extracting juice from tomatoes. Some of the ideas developed by employees are still in use by most modern canneries.

As early as about 1900 asparagus was grown in the Santa Clara Valley and harvested by Portuguese immigrants. The asparagus was first canned by Bay Side Canning Co. in 1907. As the asparagus beds matured a rusty film developed on the skin of the asparagus spears. The growers had to abandon their fields in the Santa Clara Valley and move to other localities. Most of the growers re-located around Stockton and Isleton in the Delta on peat land. This soil is soft and retains its moisture which is ideal for asparagus plants.

All raw products were delivered to the cannery by horses and wagons from



the Santa Clara Valley and the more distant products came by train in cattle cars or by boats from the San Joaquin and Sacramento Delta. In later years automobile trucks and trailers were used.

The commodities canned at the Alviso plant were: spinach, asparagus, cherries, apricots, plums, peaches, pears, tomatoes, catsup, tomato sauce, hot sauce, tomato puree, fish sauce, fruits for salad, vegetables for salad, and later fruit cocktail.

The Isleton Plant was built in 1919. It was located on the Sacramento River. The cannery was ready for processing spinach and asparagus that same year. Isleton at that time was a very small community. It became the asparagus center of the world. This location was selected as almost 100% of the asparagus was planted in the peat soil on the Sacramento Delta. Ten acres were purchased at the time to build the cannery, warehouse, cabins, apartment type quarters, bunk houses and homes to accommodate about 500 people. Most of the cannery workers were transported from Alviso by boat for the canning season.

All raw products such as asparagus in lug boxes and spinach in crates were delivered to the cannery on scows, barges and river boats. Years later, about 1925, Ford's Model T and Model A were used to haul these products from the ranches. The light model trucks were used because they were light in weight and easy to handle on soft peat land. They were also very favorable to use to cross the many small ferries that had been built for horse and buggy. The water ways were perfect for the delivery and the shipping of both raw and canned products.

Up to about 1921, 100% of the asparagus processed was the white. Bay Side started experimenting and canned a few green that same year. Asparagus from 20,000 acres was processed daily. The present day canners pack about 85% green and 15% white asparagus.

The boats, Delta King and Delta Queen, hauled the bulk of the canned products daily. Besides hauling freight these boats also carried passengers on pleasure trips. The Delta King and Delta Queen made one trip daily from San Francisco to Sacramento and one return trip the following day.

The Mayfield Plant was built around 1924 in what is now a part of Palo Alto. The site in Mayfield was selected because many women cannery workers were living in that area. The cannery processed peaches, pears and tomatoes. A few years later the cannery was sold to Allen Cutler Packing Co. also known as the Sutter Packing Co.

After Thomas Foon Chew's death at the age of 41 in 1931, the Isleton and Alviso plants continued to operate for some years. The Alviso plant was sold to the Bay Shore Canning Co. in 1936 and the Isleton plant was sold to Flotill Products of Stockton. (Flotill is now known as Tillie Lewis Foods, Inc.)





Donald O. De Mers, Jr.

What's In A Symbol?

Some weeks ago, the San Jose Historical Landmarks Commission petitioned the City Council of San Jose to return to the use of the original City Seal—a circular device consisting of a sheaf of wheat and grapevines set upon a field of blue that has been in use from the 1850's.

Since the Bicentennial, however, the City has been using the logo adopted for that celebration in 1977. Letterhead, business cards, and vehicles all bore the imprint of the new design which was a sunburst imposed on a map of the State of California with the words "Heritage, Happiness, and Hope" worked into the design of modern graphic quality.

What was processed as a routine administrative request to revert to the original City Seal, soon expanded into a political free-for-all, with only Councilmembers McEnery and Estruth voting to remain with the traditional 1850 era symbol. The issue of cost for changing back to the old seal was paramount with those Councilmembers wishing to adopt the modern Bicentennial design as the official City Seal. At the same time, the question was raised as to what entity was most descriptive of the City which had adopted the "Sheaf of Wheat" symbol shortly after having served as the State of California's first capitol.

In later weeks, individual meetings and letters convinced the City Council to remain with the 1850's design (with the exception of adding an accent mark over the "e" in "José.")

In a city that has lost so many of the reminders and items from the past that help make it a unique and beautiful place in which to live, it is somewhat cheering that the sheaf of wheat and grapevines still live on in some manner.

* * * * *

NOTICE! Members who now can qualify from Associate to full membership, please, notify our Financial Sec., John Clark, phone 294-3176. An Associate is one who has not met the fifty year California residency requirement at the time they joined with their spouse who qualified.

An interesting program is scheduled for the June 2 Luncheon. Highlighted will be awards to our Annual Historical Essay Contest winners, also the election of our new directors for the coming year.

ALL ABOARD! TRAIN COMES TO KELLEY PARK The "South Pacific Coast Railroad" is scheduled to open in late June. The little S. P. C. railroad will run from Happy Hollow Park and Baby Zoo past Leninger Center and the Japanese Friendship Gardens. It will parallel Coyote Creek and Kelley Park picnic area to the new entrance of the San Jose Historical Museum. The engine is a scaled reproduction of a Baldwin woodburning steam engine with four gondola cars. The new baby will be pampered with propane.

In May 1878 The South Pacific Coast made its first stop in San Jose out of Oakland continuing its route to Santa Cruz—called the "narrow gauge."

Well, our own active Board members, Frances Fox and Carolyn de Vries are currently teaching in the Local History Center in Cupertino. "Historic San Jose and Its Adobes" is covered by Frances Fox on Monday evenings, while Carolyn treads "The Ghost Towns of the Santa Cruz Mountains" on Wednesday evenings. Field trips are a part of both sessions.

Welcome New Members

Hazel Agrillo
Ugene S. Autra
Dessie M. Blue
Violet A. Blume
Irene Bradley
Rosalie Buletti
John W. Clove
Marie F. Davis
Olive Durfee
Alma Ferrari

Olivia Ferrari
Margaret Guy
Louise Habura
Armand Heymann
Genevieve Heymann
Marjorie Jenkins
Dixie Lee
Lydia Le Deit
Mary McConnell
Maxine McLaurin
Lillian Parsons

Dorothy Radisich
Helen C. Reed
Charlena Saunders
Gladys R. Selden
Virginia Shannon
John W. Sinclair
Roni Sinclair
Betty Stevens
Steve Stevens
Audrey Vermillion



Beyond the sunset

Olive Bailey
Georgia E. Hanjes
Lois Johnson

Frances Lanyon
Lester Le Fevre
Marian L. Nunes
Loretta Mertens

Pearl Moore
Leslie Sheridan
Daniel Yeager



TOURING WITH THE CALIFORNIANS

July 11-12 : — LAKE TAHOE — Hop aboard this JOLLY BANDWAGON — real hasty — 'Tis Lawrence Welk and his Champagne Music Makers.

August 31 : — The KING TUT SPLENDOR in San Francisco.

Sept. 5 thru 22 : — ALASKA — Hurry! Space still available, but reservations must be made within the next three weeks (by June 22) for this grand experience.

The PASSION PLAY in Oberammergau, Germany is the outstanding feature of The Californians 15 day grand tour to Germany and Austria in September 1980. Brochure available soon.

Tour Committee:	Barbara Johnsen	}	planning & escorting
	Alice Vetterle		
	Ruth Gross		phone reservations
	Marguerite Froess		bookkeeping
	Marjorie Rusht	}	reservations at quarterly luncheons
	Rose Schaefer		
	Hazel Rebella		

The committee welcomes the help of any members interested in planning tours. Suggestions are needed for trips, especially the one and two day trips. Call Ruth Gross or write to The Californians.

FOR TOUR RESERVATIONS: Call Ruth Gross at 294-9830 between 9 a.m. and noon Monday through Friday ONLY. When confirmed, make check payable to "The Californians" and mail to 100 Serena Way, Santa Clara, CA 95051.

NOTICE

PLEASE check your membership card.

Does it have 1979 on it? If not please send three dollars (\$3) each for your membership to the Financial Secretary, John Clark, 1900 Emory Street, San Jose, CA 95126.

Phone 294 - 3176

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE New active members upon payment of \$1 initiation fee will have the option of paying the \$3 yearly dues or purchasing a \$45 Life Membership, (\$75 for husband and wife subscribing at the same time).

The same Life Membership privileges are extended to present members.



HELLO PIONEERS
JUNE 2nd
 IS OUR LUNCHEON DATE
For Reservations PLEASE CALL
247-6606

*Call this same number if you must cancel
 This is a 7 day 24-hour Answering Service*
 DOORS OPEN AT 10:30 ... LUNCHEON AT 12.

ATTENTION!

Members, please be more conscientious about sending in changes of address. If this task is left to the Post Office, we are charged 25¢ per RETURNED TRAILBLAZER.

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