

YOUNG PIONEER HISTORICAL ESSAY CONTEST

BETWIXT BETWEEN SWEET SIXTEEN

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PREFACE

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to live in a different time? How does living then contrast to living today? I did.

I chose to compare the life of the sixteen-year-old of today with the sixteen-year-old of 1910. I selected the year 1910 because that year was close to closing the "era of innocence".

The life of a teenager is influenced by many factors other than parents. My essay will examine five areas: Education, transportation, clothing, dating/courtship and opportunities for their future.

I have tried to be as accurate as research allows. However, please take note that in stating the year 1910, the information may encompass about two years preceding or following that year.

EDUCATION

Education is the most important and major part of today's teenager's life. But how important was it at the beginning of the century?

In 1910, the average child attended a one-room school for about one-half of the 143-day school year. They were taught by untrained school teachers. By 1914, the average student attended 86 days of the 158-day school year. Today, the average teenager attends a 70-room school for an average of 170 of the 176-day school year. The high school of today employs about an average of 80 teachers per school, all required to have a five-year teaching credential.

The total schooling in the early 1900's was only 6.16 years average. The student who graduates in 1982 will have attended school for 13 years.

The courses offered in 1910 were limited compared with today. Their curriculum consisted of history, geography, spelling, reading and mathematics. Our present schedule consists of U.S. history and world history, math through calculus, sciences which include biology, chemistry and physics, driver and health education, three to four foreign languages (a choice), home economic courses, business courses and several english courses.

The students of 1910 who chose to continue their education attended the Old Normal School later to become San Jose State University. However, most girls ended their schooling when in her mid-teens. Today, the colleges are attended by

80% of all high school graduates. The college attended is determined largely by the financial situation. We do have a choice of attending a community college in San Jose or San Jose State University or the University of Santa Clara or Stanford University or leaving San Jose to attend a University elsewhere.

Classes were small at the beginning of this century. The graduating class had only about 100 students. This, of course, was due to the comparable small size of the Valley. My graduating class will consist of 475 students from my school alone and there are today 59 high schools in Santa Clara County.

Education is a basic part of every teenager's life. There have been many changes in the education of young people, but it doesn't necessarily mean the changes have been for the better. The system was adequate in 1910 because San Jose had not become an industrialized city yet. However, the system then would not benefit student of today because we are no longer an agricultural society. BUT, YES - education was as important then as it is now.

orchardists to pay cash for supplies, and in turn insures the prosperity of merchants. It is, as a result, a city of substantial business blocks, magnificent residences and beautiful gardens.

**MODEL
AND
MODERN.**

It is not only a city which presents much that is beautiful and substantial architecturally, but it is a center of art and music, culture and christianity, noted for its atmosphere of elegance and refinement. Its streets are wide and most of them beautifully paved with asphaltum. Electric cars glide along the streets and far into the suburbs. It is brilliantly lighted, has magnificent and costly public and private buildings, and is furnished with all the improvements which assist in forwarding the interests of its inhabitants. It may properly be called a model, modern city.

**THE
CITY
LIMITS.**

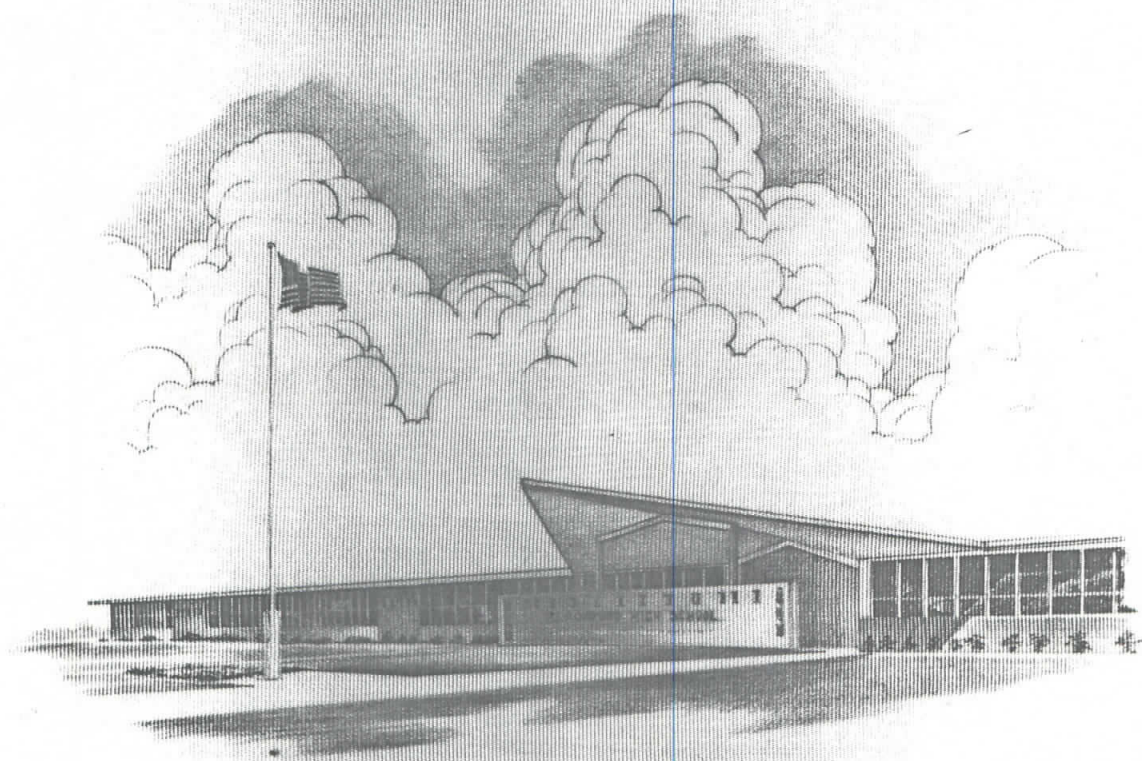
The corporate limits of the city cover an



THE STATE NORMAL SCHOOL, SAN JOSE.

OUR

Another promi



III
TRANSPORTATION

Transportation holds great significance in our lives. For not only is it an indication of our technological abilities but it is also the controller of where we go and how we get there.

In 1910, the main mode of transportation was by street cars, horse and buggies and the bicycle. There was a 5¢ streetcar service to Campbell, Los Gatos, Saratoga, Cupertino and Stanford. There was also a steam train to Alum Rock Park. Automobiles had not yet become the rave. They were still confined to those with wealth. In the graduating class of 1918, only 1 or 2 seniors were allowed to even drive a car.

Presently, most sixteen-year-olds get where they are going by car. As soon as they are sixteen, they go and get their licenses. Matter of fact, driving is taught in the high schools at the age of 15 and a half and 99% of all students learn how to drive a car in the public high school. Those whose parents have not given them a car or they have earned enough money by sixteen to buy one, must rely upon the buses, the County Transit. (There are still quite a few - myself being one of them.) However, most people consider the bus system an inconvenience because it takes much longer by bus than by car.

But are automobiles such an improvement over the horse and buggy? Today, in most cities in the United States, it takes longer to drive through the centers than it did with horse and buggy a little more than half a century ago.

CLOTHING

It is said that clothing fashions often reflect society. So true. By 1900, the linsey-woolsey of the pioneers had given way to factory-produced materials. It was a sincere indication of the industrialization to come.'

The men's attire was that of an upstanding citizen. He wore starched collars, starched cuffs, straw hats and fedoras which gave him a typical chairman-of-the board look. He also wore a derby hat which was the fashion for years, and the English raincoat came to stay. San Jose was no exception to the fashions.

The women's attire, which included the young girls, had changed from long dresses to long skirts and shirtwaists. The skirts were generally down to the floor. However, they sometimes showed the ankles. The styles of the shirtwaists varied, but some of them showed the arm of the wearer, which was considered to be revealing. Most of the women made the clothes for themselves and the children. However, in the United States, over a billion dollars a year was spent on clothes, \$14 million on corsets alone. Here in the valley, a few were dressed well and elegantly as described, but being an agricultural society, there just wasn't much money for most. The women wore high buttoned shoes and big hats. Some women would not go outdoors without a hat. They had long hair and usually put it up in a bun. Most girls wore bows in their hair and wore hats when they went on picnics.



Actress



The business suit at its height



Young men of today dress more casually. Their attire consists of comfortable slacks, often jeans, open-collar shirt and blazer. Of course, if he were dressing for a special occasion, he would wear a three-piece suit. The young men of my generation do not wear hats as did the generation of 1910.

Now let's go to the young girls (my generation) and how we dress. Most wear pants for all occasions. However dresses are beginning to come into every day school fashion. The skirt or dress is worn a little below the knee or at mid-calf. Our shirts or blouses are generally short sleeved and low cut. As compared to 1910, we have no modesty. We wear open shoes or sandals, and sometimes even no shoes at all. Most teenagers do not wear hats except for a costumed affair. I have noticed, though, that hats could be fashionable again in the near future, as the fashion designers are working to bring them back into fashion.

Clothing styles have changed considerably since 1910. And fashion does reflect attitudes of society. We have gone from modest, "proper" standards of dress to the casual "anything goes" policies of the early 1980's.

DATING/COURTSHIP

Society's attitudes are constantly changing, especially concerning the do's and don'ts of dating. The generation of the early 1900's hardly knew the person they married as compared to today's. The latest generation had three times as many dates per week during their engagement, indicating a more intense level of courtship interaction. Where the older generation rarely discussed problems before marriage with their fiances, half of the younger group does. This particular study truly indicates the changing attitudes of courtship.

In the past, courtship might have consisted of a young man appearing twice consecutively with the same girl at the church supper, after which he was expected to approach her father to set a date for marriage. Today, the father is not even asked for permission to marry, he is simply informed of the upcoming ceremony.

Just how strict were the times? "No more cozy buggy riding or sleighing alone with a young man" and "no more close sitting on a couch (parlor sofa) after the family had gone to bed". The history books have little information and the reports from my two sources are conflicting which tells me parents are parents and kids are kids, no matter what generation. The older of the two, Jane Ballou, said it was not strict at all. Of course there were chaperones, but they were still free to date. They went to dances at the Hotel Vendome. The dances

were sponsored by the Women's Club and the Elk's Club and were especially for young adults. Their music entailed piano playing by Tillie Borhaska. These dances were often costume dances, the favorite being a Japanese theme. Another favorite dating place was a picnic at Alum Rock Park or Congress Springs, Saratoga. They would also sometimes take the train to Santa Cruz. Gladys Higgins, my second source, said her upbringing was very strict. The only dating for her took place at church socials or lodge functions. However, she admitted they would try games such as "post office". Sometimes they would get away with it but not for a very long period of time before someone would stop the game. Their means to be alone with someone they liked was to go outside during a church social and sit on the steps for a short visit.

Today's sixteen-year-old does not have too many restrictions relative to dating. The restriction seems to be the hour at which we return from our dates. Most dating is in groups. Those who date, usually go to dinner or a movie or both. Church group functions are popular.

In the beginning of the century, the attire for a picnic was very formal. The teenagers often wore their church clothes. Today, we wear jeans. Actually, we don't go on picnics too often. Most areas for family picnicing or group picnics are so crowded, unless you arrive very early in the morning, you won't even get into a park. We do, however, go for walks in the parks in our area.

Yes, society's attitudes and customs concerning dating have definitely changed. There is a big difference between the dating of today and that of seventy years ago.

OPPORTUNITIES

Knowing what is in store for them in the future has a great influence on a teenager's life. And often jobs done as a teenager prepares them for entering the working world.

Common jobs held by sixteen-year-olds in 1910 were feeding horses, baby sitting and in the summer, picking fruit. Today, teenagers work in fast-food restaurants, office clerical work, assistants in labs of various types, baby sitting, nursing homes, and to a small degree picking fruit in the summer. They do not contribute to family income. Teenagers today work to pay for their clothes (partially), a trip or vacation and to save for going to college.

What did the future promise a young man then? In 1910, agriculture dominated the Valley. Most boys grew up to take after their fathers. However, business was deemed the ideal career. Most women became teachers if they chose a working profession. Other popular jobs for the boys were butchers, general store clerking, etc. and for the girls, nursing if they did not try for a teaching profession. Today, there is no limit in any field for both boys or girls. In this Valley, many of us will become engineers or computer programmers contributing to the Silicon Valley which is micro-miniature circuitry, leader in the nation.

There is a big contrast between the two generations. Which one is for the better? Only time will tell.

CONCLUSION

The year 1910 was an important part of our history. Not only was it the end of the "era of innocence", but also the beginning of our advanced technological county.

The education of that yeas was the foundation of today's school systems. The transportation and clothing industires had set the stage for the industrial surge to follow.

Yes, those golden days of innocence are gone when modesty and virtue were most important and children helped their parents work, looking forward to someday owning the family business.

The days of horses have vanished to be replaced by polluting automobiles in a quick-paced society.

Conservatives and liberals alike agree that we cannot survive at our present rate of advancements. Perhaps the time has come to turn back the clock to a time that was truely beneficial to the Santa Clara County.

Perhaps I am dreaming my dream again!

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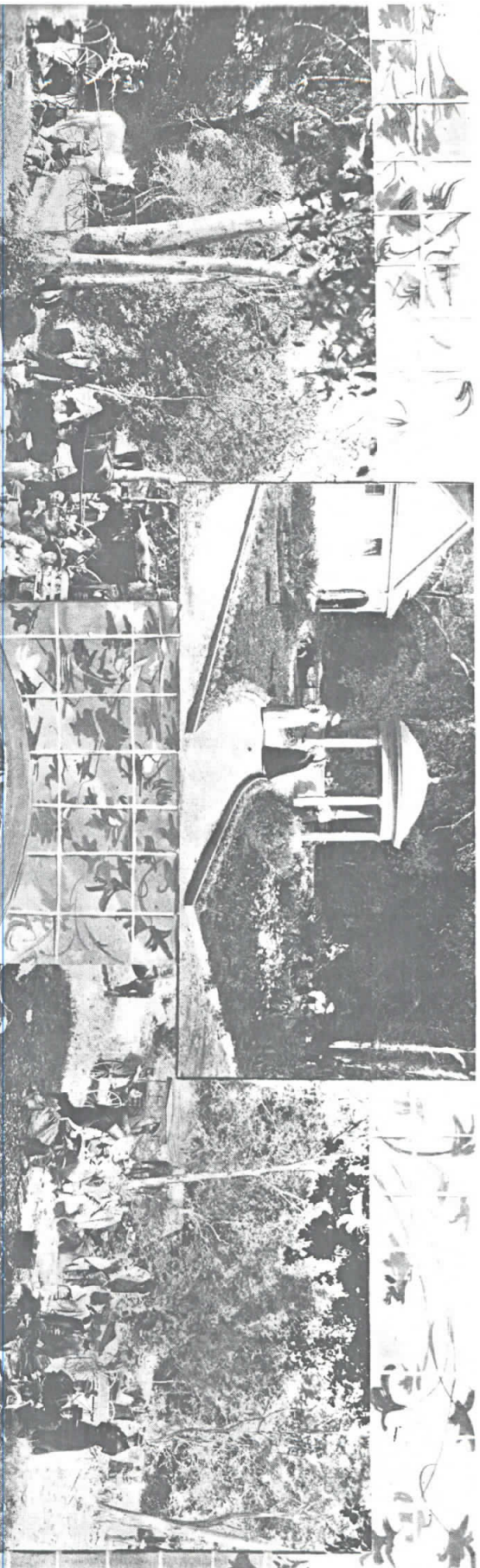
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Sources: Jane Ballou, born 1892 in Santa Clara Valley, now residing in Willow Glen and Gladys Higgins, born 1902, now resides in San Jose.



A Youth Party

The Lower Pomona Falls

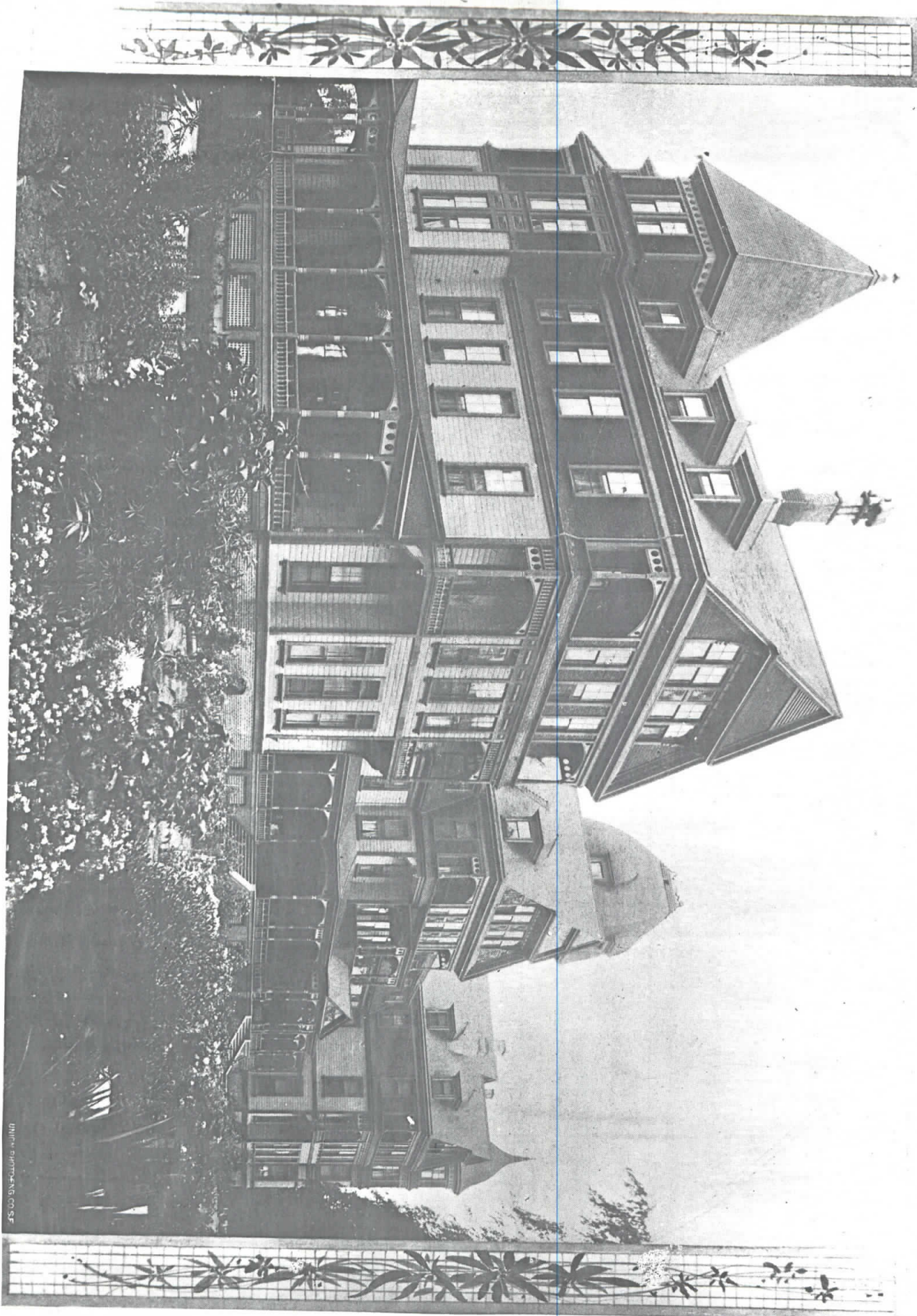
SCENES IN ALUM ROCK PARK

The Tugboat

The Upper Pomona Falls

Camping among the Oaks

Scene on Pomona Creek



HOTEL VENDOME SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

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