

T H E T R A I L B L A Z E R

Quarterly Bulletin of the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County

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The Old Fair Grounds

Herbert C. Jones

The early day fairs were held on the land which is now known as Hanchett Park, bordered by The Alameda, Race Street, Park Avenue and Shasta Avenue, amounting to about 75 acres.

This land, part of the Los Coches Grant, was acquired by the Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Society in 1859. On the western part, now bordered by Park Avenue (then Union Avenue) was a mile race track with the back stretch running parallel to and adjoining Park Avenue. On the east side of the track was the large grandstand looking westward. The land within the circle of the track was planted in hay or grain so it would not obstruct the view from the grandstand, across the race track.

The race horses were stabled in a long row of low buildings bordering Race Street, hence, the derivation of that name.

Between County Fairs the trainers exercised their horses on the track. Also, on occasion, San Jose and Santa Clara High Schools staged their field days on the race track, using the course for the mile run and the short stretch in front of the grandstand for the 100 and 220 yard dashes.

On The Alameda, where the Westminster Presbyterian Church now stands, was a third of a mile, banked, concrete bicycle course. Here performed some of the world's bicycle record holders. Also staged in the oval were football games by the Stanford varsity and other teams.

Facing The Alameda at the junction of Race Street was an extensive grove of eucalyptus trees, and in the center of this grove was a large pavilion. Here at fair time the farmers exhibited their fruits and vegetables. Also the children of the County schools had exhibits of penmanship and drawings. This pavilion was also used for political rallies on election years where some of the "spellbinders" of the Republican and Democratic parties held forth.

Where Cinnabar Street enters The Alameda, back in the 1860's there was a tollgate, The Alameda from that point to Santa Clara being operated as a toll road.

The Agricultural Society finally ran into debt, a judgement was recovered against it, and the property lost on a judgement to creditors in 1905. It was then developed as a residential subdivision, known as Hanchett Park.

By-lines from the President
Austen D. Warburton

Pioneers, we are now over five hundred strong and one of the largest organizations of this type in the state! The changes in the By-Laws enacted at our December meeting and the increase in annual dues to two dollars per year commencing with 1962 will enable us to carry on an even more dynamic program than in the past. Fortified with an enthusiastic membership, we should continually strive to keep the communities in which we live mindful of the fine traditions of our Pioneer Heritage.

And so it is with song and singing! I was dismayed to read of the action of a school official in a nearby county forbidding the use in the schools of many of our beautiful traditional carols this past Christmas season. While one can appreciate the fact that each person is entitled to his own religious belief, one wonders where Christmas would be without the Christ Child! To exclude the use of songs simply because they have some reference to the Christmas story is contrary to the spirit of the Pioneer Christmas.

And speaking of songs, wouldn't it be wonderful if families could once more gather around a piano - or a banjo or guitar - and sing as they once did. At close of day on the dusty westward trail what comfort was found in music by our pioneers! What comfort there would be for us in these trying days! What an influence for family "togetherness" it would be! Yes, to paraphrase the echoes of our beautiful Christmas program, "Dear Hearts and Gentle People: Love's Old Sweet Song". Let us sing them and cherish them as one of the most beautiful and wholesome contributions that one generation can give to another.

Historical Library
Clyde Arbuckle

STATISTICS ON EARLY SANTA CLARA COUNTY FLOUR MILLS

Until 1846 the Spanish-Californian had a "cow economy". His cattle roamed the hill and valley by the hundreds of thousands, furnishing meat and leather, media of exchange and many other useful items.

But the American's liking for wheat flour products brought all that to an abrupt end, particularly here in Santa Clara County. Wheat farming became so important, that this county soon boasted ten mills producing 75 or more barrels of flour a day.

According to the PACIFIC COAST BUSINESS DIRECTORY for 1867, the steam-powered mill, operated by Messrs. Rowley & Adams at Alviso, had a daily output of 300 barrels. The same source credits James Lick's water-powered mill on Guadalupe river, near the present Agnew, with 250 barrels a day.

Delmas & Poulain's Orange Mill of San Jose and Lemuel Robinson's Santa Clara Mill of Santa Clara ranked next. Both were steam-powered, and each produced 200 barrels a day.

The water-powered Santa Rosa Mill of Los Gatos (formerly Forbes' Mill) ground out 150 barrels a day under the management of W. H. Rogers.

Two steam-powered San Jose mills produced considerably less. Cottrell's Vineyard Mill turned out 110 barrels a day, and Moody Brothers Mill 100 barrels.

A second mill in Santa Clara--The Dixon--barely made the 100 barrel a day class. Two others, located at widely separated points, ranked much lower. C. McCoy's steam-powered Gilroy Mill had a maximum capacity of 80 barrels a day, while John Whisman's Redwood Mill of McCartyville (now Saratoga) used the water of Saratoga Creek to produce 75.

We have no reliable statistics on smaller establishments operated by two or three men each. But in 1867 the county's seven principal mills represented an investment of \$680,000 in just buildings and machinery.

The water-powered mills eventually converted to steam or discontinued operation altogether. Then, as orchards inexorably spread across the valley floor, wheat gave way to fruit, the remaining mills closed, and the county entered a new economic era.

Pioneer Anecdotes

My mother was born in Denmark. After her arrival in New York, she came directly to California to stay with her brother and family at Watsonville.

Mother left new York by train for California. She noticed passengers eating out of new tin cans, and after eating they would toss the cans out the window. Mother couldn't understand why they threw them away. In Denmark people never threw anything away that could be used again. She and her fellow Danes picked up as many cans as they could, but after a couple days they had so many cans and bottles they didn't know what to do with them. When they reached Omaha, they threw them away.

After arriving in Watsonville mother told her brother about the incident, and was told that it was an American custom to throw things away, but she never did take to the idea, and sometimes in later years, would crush cans and bury them near the roots of her rose bushes. She said, "plants needed iron to help keep them healthy".

Rudolph M. Fischer

When mother came from Germany to California, it was a long, tedious journey.

Traveling across the great plains country, large herds of antelope and buffalo were often seen. At one time, a twenty minute delay was caused by a herd of buffalo crossing the track ahead of the engine. Another delay was caused by thousands of grasshoppers settling on the rails, causing the locomotive driving wheels to spin, as they could not get traction.

When the train reached an eating stop, the passengers were allowed twenty minutes to eat and everyone rushed into the dining room, as there were no diners on the trains in those days.

Mother never could get used to eating corn off the cob, it seemed so crude to her. In Germany only hogs ate corn in this manner.

Elsa Jensen

My grandfather, John S. Conover came around the horn in 1849. He had the first brick store and was the second postmaster of Monterey.

Flora A. Brooks

Looking Backward

Arthur Fisk

O'Brien's fine candies started with the Gold Rush! In the early 1850's young Maurice O'Brien, after a try at the "diggins," turned to candy making. In 1868, with courage, a bride and \$500, he opened for business in San Jose. That was the start of O'Brien's, oldest confectionery on the Pacific Coast.

At first, the young bridegroom made his candy by lamplight and peddled it on foot by day. Later he opened a small store.

In 1878 Maurice O'Brien introduced ice cream sodas to the West. Many a belle of the era blushed with pride when her beau invited her to O'Brien's to partake of the only ice cream sodas west of Detroit.

Maurice O'Brien's son Charles took over the business in 1902 and continued the tradition of fine candy through the great earthquake, two world wars, the roaring 20's and the thrifty 30's.

Later, Maurice O'Brien's grandson, Russell, took over the business to carry on the tradition, as a reminder of the old, romantic days of early California.

(Information furnished by Mrs. J. Franklin Moore)

60 Years Ago

(From the files of the San Jose Mercury, January, 1902)

San Jose Turn Verein gave a New Year's Eve ball last evening in Turner's Hall. Schubert's orchestra furnished the music.

Mens patent leather oxfords \$3.50. A multitude of handsome styles at Stuart's. 23 E. Santa Clara Street.

'Possum dinner for benefit of Zion M. E. Church 12 to 3 p.m., January 7, 1902.

At the Victory Theatre, "The Girl I Left Behind Me". Matinee prices 10¢. Evenings 20¢ and 30¢.

The funeral of Anthony Pillot, the well known pioneer, was held yesterday afternoon from his late residence on South Fourth Street.

Ladies combination suits, full line in ecru and white. Price per garment \$1.00 at The Arcade.

The 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. trains to Alum Rock Park will be the only ones on Sundays. H. Center, manager San Jose and Santa Clara Railroad Company.

Rhodes & Lewis have a large stock of Ladies and Gents shoulder braces. First Street, San Jose.

San Jose's Electric Light Tower - Citizens are often startled in the early morning to find many ducks and other wild water fowls lying dead beneath the tower.

Pure candy at O'Brien's, 387 So. First Street.

Supervisor, John Roll and County Clerk, Henry Pfister were Los Gatos visitors yesterday.

Prof. A. L. Jones, will attend the State Teachers convention at Pacific Grove.

Look for it Here

At our Christmas meeting in December, special tribute was paid to our members who are 85 years of age or older. Those present were; Mrs. Edna Clinton Ridley, Mrs. Elizabeth Berberich, Mrs. Emma Rutan, Mrs. Harriet Burnett, Mrs. Flora A. Brooks, Mrs. Adelcisa Fortini and Mr. Albert A. Haehnlen. Those that could not be present were; Mrs. John Drew, Mrs. Minnie Sicotte, Miss Mary F. Houracan, Mrs. Mabel Gallagher Luce. If there were others, sorry you didn't let us know.

Miss Alice Vetterle and Mrs. Bessie Colman made a special trip to the Sierra to gather over 200 pine cones for table decorations used by Mrs. Owen and her committee at our Christmas party on December 2nd.

The corsages for our Christmas party on Dec. 2nd were made by Mrs. Kate Owen's daughter, Mrs. Evelyn Geoffroy of Saratoga.

The revision in our By-laws enacted at our December meeting, increase our annual dues to \$2 per year, beginning Jan. 1, 1962. Application for membership fee remains at \$1. All new applications must be accompanied by \$3 and two signatures of sponsoring members.

The Pioneer Society's annual scholarship has been awarded to Miss Barbara Hamlin. Her topic will be, "The transition period of the courts in Santa Clara County".

About 20 members of the Pioneer Society attended the meeting honoring the Pioneers at the Womens' Club Adobe, 3260 The Alameda. Mr. Austen Warburton was the speaker.

Mrs. Lorena M. O'Fallon, flag chairman of Santa Clara County, appointed by the California Federation of Republican Women, has received letters of commendation from Presidents Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Kennedy.

Dr. and Mrs. Earl E. Rhoads and Mr. and Mrs. Arthur M. Fisk, celebrated their 47th wedding anniversaries on November 26th.

The Hubert Hoods enjoyed a beautiful color tour through the New England States and Eastern Canada during October and November.

Mr. and Mrs. Curtner Zanker were Canadian visitors during October.

Mrs. Edith B. Hichborn has returned home, from an extended tour of Mexico.

Miss Caroline Rogers has returned home from a four months tour of Southern Europe, where she visited its famous art galleries.

Chartered bus tour to Monterey on January 27th.

Welcome

Congratulations to our new Members: Louise K. Allen-our five-hundredth member, Mauritz A. Berggren, Mrs. Mauritz A. Berggren, Mary D. Ferry, Georgia E. Hanjes, Jerry Hodges, Frank C. Ladner, Mrs. Frank C. Ladner, Janet A. McMillan, John A. Mirassou, Mrs. John A. Mirassou, Charles Moulthrop, Charles E. Northup, Marian Northup, Lena Marie Peters, Bernice Roth Roe, Gracella Roundtree Anderson, Helen M. Walsh, Ruth A. Winsor.

Under the Weather

Mrs. Pauline Jones, suffered from a bad fall last October, breaking the bone in her right heel. We are pleased to report she has discarded her crutches.

Mr. Harry E. Hunter, who recently suffered a stroke is recuperating satisfactorily.

Mr. Harry F. Potts, who was stricken with a heart attack is now at home, 1974 De La Pena Ave., Santa Clara and can have company.

Kindly keep your officers informed as to the condition of any ill member, and report any sickness or deaths to the Chairman of our Good-will committee, Mrs. Irene Lial, phone CY 4-2057.

Beyond the Horizon

William Stanislaus Burke

May 23, 1910 - December 16, 1961

The officers and members of the California Pioneer Society of Santa Clara County extend their sincere sympathy to the relatives and friends of our beloved member.

THE TRAILBLAZER

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The Social Club of your Society meets on the 1st and 3rd Monday afternoon of each month. Card playing and various activities highlight each meeting. For further information concerning Club activities call Mrs. Kate L. Owen, CY 5-1153.

For information concerning chartered bus tours for members of the Pioneer Society, phone Gertrude A. Bernhardt, CY 3-3087.

Any items for the Pioneer scrap book may be sent to Mrs. Elsa Jensen, 520 Bradley Ave., San Jose 28, Calif.

Without a sense of history, no man can truly understand the problems of our times. Winston Churchill

Return to: 595 So. 13th Street
 San Jose 12, Calif.