

## Population takes off with a new air base

By Sabine Goerke-Shrode

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Well into the 20th century, Vacaville, Fairfield, and Suisun remained small communities with slow-growing populations. By 1940, Fairfield had 1,312 residents. That growth pattern changed suddenly when construction of the Fairfield-Suisun Army Airfield began in 1942. Hundreds of workers flooded into the community to construct the new base - and every one of them needed a place to stay.

The Fairfield community began the discussion on how to accommodate these workers late in 1942. On Dec. 24, the Solano Republican reported on the decision to open a trailer court.

"The first trailer court unit in Fairfield, other than the DeLuxe Motor Court, was approved at Tuesday night's meeting of the Fairfield city council when Tom Smith appeared before the council and showed that he had already done considerable work on the project, which will accommodate 14 trailers. He stated that he had secured from Mayor Elwyn Huck permission to go ahead with such a project, since there is no ordinance against trailer courts inside the city.

"Smith's trailer court is situated between Texas and Missouri streets and between Great Jones and Pennsylvania. He stated to the council that he will charge \$3 per week rental for the unit spaces and will personally be responsible for all tenants, sanitation and deportment."

At that time, Pennsylvania Street formed the outer border of the town.

City Council members voted to accept the proposal. Only Councilmember Leo McInnis opposed it, concerned that Fairfield had no regulatory ordinances in place. He also felt that the city should use empty land it owned rather than build a trailer court next to permanent homes.

In the meantime, trailers began to pop up along other locations, along County roads and on farm plots.

A city ordinance, passed on Jan. 4, 1943, tried to regulate this development. Tom Smith now was permitted to use city property west of Fairfield to establish a trailer base for 40 trailers, with expansion possible for another to 100 units.

"The 2 acres, granted without cost to Smith, will accommodate many trailers and help in keeping the town proper free of congestion, as well as bring much business to the city," said the Republican on Jan. 14.

Tent cities and trailer parks could only provide a temporary respite as accommodation for the transitory workers. City leaders in Fairfield and in Vacaville recognized that future air base personnel relocating to the surrounding communities with their families would need permanent housing.

On Feb. 18, 1943, the newspaper announced that "Vacaville Plugging for Roads, Housing." A booster dinner hosted by the Vacaville Chamber of Commerce launched the effort to secure funding for a new road between Vacaville and the "Fairfield Airport" and to attract federal funding for new housing units.

The Fairfield Lions Club promised its support for housing projects in Vacaville and in Fairfield.

"Hugh Wren and Leo McInnis of the Lions Club yesterday spoke for full cooperation of Vacaville and Fairfield in the matter of new federal housing projects to relieve the congested conditions in all areas in the Vallejo shipyard and Fairfield air base districts. Leo McInnis, city councilman, showed that more than six months ago the Fairfield city council supplied the War Department with reams of data and information looking to a Federal housing project here. He hopes that both Fairfield and Vacaville might be granted federal aid in this direction since Fairfield has more homeseekers than it can possibly accommodate with the present housing facilities, and it is known that Vacaville is in the same condition."

In March, United States Engineer Forrest Varney reiterated the need for permanent housing at a Lions Club information meeting.

The Solano Republican wrote on March 23: "While little could be detained not already known by those who have visited the field from time to time, graphic charts displayed by Mr. Varney, gave the Club members a better understanding of the immensity of the undertaking there

"While this is a small air field compared to others in the State, Mr. Varney is of the opinion that when in full operation the project will require the services of many air corps soldiers as well as many civilians. It will be a small city, he stated. He is of the opinion that many new houses locally will be required to house the civilian personnel."

Until that permanent housing was available, incoming personnel needed other accommodations. A call for living quarters went out by the U.S.O., published by the

Republican on April 22, 1943.

"List Available Rooms Now For Airdrome Workers Coming Soon," the headline read.

"Houses, apartments, and rooms are needed for the married army men who are to be transferred here very soon. Already, there have been many inquiries at the U.S.O. Club, by these service men about living quarters here for their wives and families."

The U.S.O Club offered to compile a list of available places, since "Some of the men are off duty for just a few hours and haven't the time to do much more than inquire at the Club.

"Mr. Woodard, phone 315, or 135, will be glad to list whatever you have to rent.

"There will also be a need for rooms to be rented for short periods by visiting relatives of these army men. So, perhaps, if you wouldn't care to rent a room permanently, you would rent it for a few days, if so, your name could be placed on the list and you could be called when the need arises."

I will continue this story in my next column.

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