

Suisun roared ahead in twenties

By Jerry Bowen

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What is today Suisun City has had its ups and downs over the years and in the mid-1920s was gaining a reputation as a prosperous and desirable place to live.

The town of Suisun, located on the main line of the Southern Pacific Railroad and at the head of Suisun Channel, was one of the oldest towns in the state, as it was founded in 1850.

Before the advent of the railroad into California, it was one of the liveliest towns north of San Francisco. It was at the time the main shipping point for a vast territory of lying to the north, east and west.

It had always been an exceptionally good business town, but after the construction of a state highway, Suisun was bypassed and it was for a time somewhat at a standstill.

However, in 1924 when connections were made by a new paved road from Cordelia to and through the town to the state highway at the county seat, prosperity once again was on the rise and within less than one year, conditions had changed to such an extent that it became one of the busiest business towns for its size in the state.

Suisun had many advantages that many towns didn't enjoy. It was on the main line of the Southern Pacific Company with 18 passenger trains stopping at the station each day. The Suisun Channel was also at the head of water navigation, which resulted in extremely low competitive freight rates to and from this point.

While Suisun was a town of less than 1,000 inhabitants, five hotels were prosperously supported, with up-to-date business houses, and its social, educational, and civic conditions were remarkably good, according to newspapers of the day.

A number of things figure into the business activity of the town: the Southern Pacific, with a yard payroll of more than 100 persons, and the Winters Canning Company which employed from 600 to 700 people two-thirds of the year, many of the people being employed the year around. In addition there were fruit packinghouses, a pickle salting station, and an up-to-date creamery.

Contiguous to the town is the Suisun Valley of more than 30,000 acres that contained highly prolific bearing fruit trees. There were cattle and sheep ranges and grain farms to

the north and east, while rich dairy country extended for a great many miles in the southerly direction. In addition to the dairying and the grazing of the marshland south of Suisun, was one of the greatest duck shooting districts in the West.

Hundreds of duck hunters had memberships in duck clubs in the district and hundreds of thousands of dollars were invested in the development of these clubs. Thousands of dollars were brought into Solano County each year, much of it being circulated in the town of Suisun.

According to a 1925 edition of the River News, "The condition of the banks of Suisun is an index of the prosperity of the town. The Bank of Suisun with a capital stock of \$100,000 has deposits amounting to more than \$1,000,000.

Its surplus fund now amounting to more than \$150,000 four or five years ago amounted to more than \$1,000,000 but a division of \$750,000 dealt out of this fund about four years ago to the stockholders in the form of a dividend brought wealth to many in this immediate neighborhood. First National Bank of Suisun, a younger financial institution, has become a power in the community and is also an exceedingly strong financial concern. This is a combined commercial and savings bank and has deposits amounting to more than \$500,000."

The town had a vigorous civic organization in the Suisun Community Club, composed mostly of businessmen and property owners of the town. This club was organized about 1923 and its members made expenditures amounting to between \$4,000 and \$5,000 in public works.

Matters of public interest were discussed at the weekly Monday noon luncheons, resulting in many civic improvements. In 1925 the club undertook construction of a \$15,000 community hall, completing it later in the year.

The women were also doing their share in the development of the town. They organized the Wednesday Club, and built a \$15,000 clubhouse. Its membership extended to the towns of Suisun, Cordelia, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Cement, Suisun Valley and Green Valley. The lots for the home of the Wednesday day Club were donated by former residents, Mrs. R. D. Robbins and her son, R. D. Robbins Jr.

Suisun built what was then a modern grammar school building and staffed it with teachers who were the best that high salaries could secure according to the River News. The newspaper also went on to say, "This magnificent school building is a most attractive structure. It is simply perfect from a sanitary standpoint, and this, no doubt, is most essential thing to be considered in the planning of a building. One thing not to be overlooked is the school auditorium. Great pains have been taken in planning this part

of the building, and upon its completion it was found to be perfect in its acoustics, the seating arrangement, and in every other detail.”

Today’s waterfront is highly desirable and its future seems to be on the upward flight to prosperity once again.

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