

Air base doubles Solano's Population

By Sabine Goerke-Shrode

Sunday, September 09, 2007

The mid 1940's saw an unprecedented population growth in the Vacaville and Fairfield areas, due to the incoming personnel for the new Fairfield-Suisun air base. For several years, both cities struggled to accommodate their new residents. Federal Housing Public Authority projects such as Waterman Park in Fairfield and Vaca Valley Acres in Vacaville were built quickly.

Waterman Park was one of two projects constructed in Fairfield, and in the process changed how a small town felt about itself.

On Oct. 12, 1943. the Solano Republican's headline said: "Forest Of New Buildings Nearing Completion In Waterman Addition" "The new Waterman Addition adjacent to the north city limit of Fairfield is fast shaping into "boomtown" - an area of completed residences - and soon will be a teeming city of nearly 160 families and twice that many single men and women.

The 18 four-family units. 114 by 20 feet each. to house four families of four or five people, will be the first completed, furnished and ready for occupancy by the numerous applicants already listed with the Federal Housing Public Authority, builders of the project.

Despite the construction speed, the houses were built to high standards and included modern amenities and communal facilities.

"The family units, like the dormitories, all have composition floors, gas heaters, electric lights, gas ranges, ice boxes, gas water heaters and modern showers and all will be modernly furnished. The units are much roomier than the outside of the structures would indicate, and by the time the dormitories are finished, the modern cafeteria, barber shop, hospital, library, recreation room and superintendent's quarters will be ready."

More than 100 carpenters, 14 plumbers, nine utility men and four laborers worked on the project. R. F. Carlson acted as the government inspector and architect's representative. Providing water for so many new residents needed some thought, and the latest in technology.

"One of the unusual features of the project is the new" 'Transite' water mains," remarked the Solano Republican on Oct. 12, "a new composition of asbestos, with a

tinsel strength greater than iron, and with the new "Teigle" joint, making it possible to install the water system in a third the time necessary for the old time water mains...

"The project will use Suisun water from the big reservoir high up on Twin Sisters mountain." By Nov. 18, company representatives expected that the first new residents would be able to move in by Thanksgiving, "with nothing remaining on that number but to clean up the floors, and do a little finishing work. The first units to be occupied are those situated just north of Webster street, where the sidewalks and curbs have been installed and all utilities placed."

A new administration building was part of the complex, "a huge structure, 247 by 200 feet in dimensions, and which will house the management and maintenance offices, tenant and morale department, games room, day nursery, community hall, lounge, cafeteria, kitchen, playrooms, rest rooms, with the modern clinic on the west end."

The Solano Republican offered further information on who would occupy the new housing on Dec. 9.

"What only a few months ago was a pasture area, with naught but wild grass and ground squirrels is today a teeming city - or will be as soon as all of the 50 or more Federal Public Housing units are completed. Many men of the Consolidated and Vultee Aircraft Corporation, with their families, are moving into the units daily, more than a dozen of the four-family units being already occupied.

"Supervisor Kincaid, in charge of the rentals for the FPHA (Federal Public Housing Authority) stated today that 80 percent of the more than 40 dwelling units will be taken by the Aircraft people, as well as two each of the six dormitories for single men and women. A like proportion of the FPHA units at Vacaville will also house the plane transport people, he stated.

"Mr. and Mrs. Kincaid now occupy the first unit at the north end of Webster street, while next to them will be Edward Piersol, head of the Consolidated-Vultee men here..." A week later, on Dec. 16, the newspaper let readers know that new families of the Consairway Division of the Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft Corporation were arriving daily from San Diego, the former base of Consairway.

At the same time, the newspaper provided an interesting summary of the early development stages of the future United States Air Force. "Consairway is one division of the Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft Corporation, explained (public relations manager) Mr. Piersol, there being 13 other divisions of the company throughout the country, all engaged in the aircraft industry. Consairway is the transport division of the military air transport line, transporting personnel and freight to all parts of the world. The company

has long years of service to its credit, and is meeting the gigantic task of transportation, with all civilian personnel, with the utmost efficiency and dispatch, the records of the company show. The entire Consairway division is moving from San Diego to this locality, dividing the personnel between Fairfield and Vacaville.”

With that many new residents, the January 1944 population figures for the county reached 110,000 residents. In only four years, based on the 1940 census figures, the county had more than doubled its population, with most of that growth occurring in Fairfield and Vacaville.

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