Investing in real estate and running a newspaper

By Nancy Dingler

Friday, April 15, 2005

Now in its sesquicentennial year, the Daily Republic began its life in Benicia as the Solano Herald in November of 1855.

The owners were Messrs, George and Cellars. Over the years, there would be a succession of editors and publishers. In 1858 the paper moved to Suisun City, the most bustling and prominent city at that time, under the direction of William J. Hooten.


A rival newspaper, the Solano Press, was absorbed by the Herald in 1869 and was renamed the Solano Republican. In October of 1875, Messrs, Montgomery and Bowen purchased the paper and moved it to Fairfield.

Sometime after 1875, Montgomery had faded into the mists of memory as Bowen remained editor and publisher. Then Bowen took on a partner in 1894, E. Dinkelspiel, and the two ran the Solano Republican for a year. Bowen disappeared and Edward Dinkelspiel became sole editor and proprietor. The Dinkelspiel family was prominent in the area.

They were part of the large group of German families that settled in the Suisun Valley. H.G.W. Dinkelspiel was a local attorney, while M. Dinkelspiel and Co. ran a dry goods store that also dabbled in furniture and farming implements.

Dinkelspiel was an energetic fellow who not only put out a weekly newspaper, but also sold real estate. In 1895, a prominent and wealthy young man, Benjamin Rush, ran for sheriff.

Rush was not only extremely successful and wealthy, but he was well liked and popular. He won the office of sheriff handily.

In April of 1895, while running for sheriff, Rush joined his old friend Dinkelspiel, as partner and proprietor of the Solano Republican. The two men also became partners in the real estate office of The Solano County Land Bureau. Both were listed as managers through 1897.
In 1899, Rush ran for state senator and once again, won easily. Dinkelspiel continued running the Solano Republican for many years, while Rush went on to be re-elected by a landslide in 1904. He ran unopposed for the state senate seat in 1908.

Among his achievements as senator: He was a member of the committee that selected the location of the state agricultural farm at Davisville, securing a tract of 800 acres for the Agricultural Department of the State University. He was also active in securing the necessary funds for Napa State Hospital and the Yountville Veteran’s Home.

Rush was born Oct. 12, 1852, at Fourteen Mile House in Sacramento County. His parents, Hiram and Sarah, had been part of the Gold Rush in 1849. However, instead of panning for gold, they had driven a herd of cattle from Indiana.

Hiram Rush let the cattle graze wild through the lush pasturage while he undertook the task of building a hotel. Sarah and Hiram Rush named the hotel Fourteen Mile House. As the herd of cattle increased, Hiram had to turn his attention to their care, while Sarah took charge of the hotel.

When Benjamin was born, the Rush family decided to move to a more healthful climate, settling into the Portrero Hills of southwestern Solano County. Hiram became one of the most prosperous men of the county with the ever-increasing cattle herd.

At one time, it was estimated that Hiram and Sarah had 3,000 head of cattle, several hundred horses and owned 51,000 acres, some located in Monterey County.

When Benjamin was 13, the family decided to move to San Francisco. Benjamin and his sisters, Eleanor, Sarah, Mary and Kate, received the finest education available in both San Francisco and Oakland.

Benjamin entered the Oakland Military Academy and when he completed the requirements, he enrolled in Heald’s Business College of San Francisco. Upon graduation from Heald’s, Benjamin went to work for Titcomb and Williams of San Francisco as a bookkeeper.

In early December 1869, Hiram was crossing a creek in his buggy, when he was thrown from the vehicle violently. The freak accident killed him instantly.

Hiram was 60 years old when he died. The young Benjamin was only 17. Sarah took over managing affairs until Benjamin was 23. He quit his position with Titcomb and Williams to take over managing the ranch and other properties.

A year later, in 1876, Benjamin married Miss Anna M. McKean, a native of Astoria, Ore.
Benjamin and Anna would eventually have seven children. Benjamin continued to improve and expand the ranch, as well as the land holdings that his father, Hiram, had initiated. In partnership with C.F.D. Hastings of Hastings ranch, he began breeding celebrated horses.

One of his horses, Aerolite, as a 3 year-old, sold for $8,000 in the 1880s, quite a large sum at the time. Along the way, he purchased a 700-acre fruit ranch in the Suisun Valley, expanding the peach, apricot, prune and pear tree plantings from the original 40 acres that already were producing fruit.

Benjamin invested in raising sheep as well as cattle. “It is his opinion that this climate is more conducive than any other to the well-being of the famous Short Durham.”

Besides raising stock and fruit, the Rush ranch, under Benjamin’s management, marketed in San Francisco large quantities of grain. To facilitate the labor of shipping, he constructed two landings, one on the Suisun slough, known as Rush’s landing, and the other on Montezuma Slough.

According to local resident Guido Colla, who contacted me via e-mail in 2001, he was told that Benjamin liked walking about Fairfield and Suisun, shooting the breeze with friends and acquaintances around town and while doing so had a habit of carving on the telephone poles on Main Street. It was said that several poles had to be replaced over the years because of this. On Sept. 8, 1940, Benjamin Rush passed away at his Suisun City home, at the respected age of 87.

Special note: The Museum Roundtable group is beginning to grow in membership, which is great news.

They are still seeking people interested in history that have a passion for a museum. More and more wonderful collections are being unearthed.

At the moment they are being housed in many locales and homes with the hope of soon housing them in the Fairfield Museum.

Please join the Roundtable Museum Group in their effort to create a museum in the old library building.

April 23 will be a big Solano County history day. Rockville Chapel and Cemetery will be hosting a pioneer family reunion from 10 am to 1 p.m. Keynote speakers will be longtime residents Lucille Vinsant and Frank Pangburn, whose theme will be “Wagon Trails West.” Rush Ranch will hold a open house from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on the same day with pioneer demonstrations. Have a history day with the family and learn
about the people who settled the area.