

## Saturday Club galvanized Vacaville society

By Sabine Goerke-Shrode

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By the turn of the last century, Vacaville had developed into a small town with a lively society. In an age without radio, television, movie theaters or other forms of amusement, people developed different venues to keep themselves entertained.

Schools and churches offered lectures, choirs and concerts. Different clubs formed for various reasons, offering anything from simple card games to elaborate schemes to improve the community.

The Saturday Club was one of the most influential clubs in Vacaville. It was established at Mrs. Eva B. Jones's home on Tuesday, May 18, 1909. Its purpose was, as the Vacaville Reporter announced on May 21 "PLEASURE AND PROFIT. Ladies Organize the Saturday Club of Vacaville. Its Object is to Encourage and Promote the Study of Musical Art in all of Its Forms."

Meetings were held on the first Saturday of the month.

Within a short time, the club attracted so many women that the meetings had to take place in the annex of the Community Presbyterian Church. By the end of the first year, the club had 121 active members, 20 student members and two honorary members. The initiation fee was \$1, with an additional dollar for annual dues. This fee included concert season tickets.

Programs were quite varied and featured guest artists, as well as presentations by members. For the meeting on Feb. 5, 1910, The Reporter was able to announce the club's first professional guest artist, as well as show the varied talent that existed in the community: "The meeting promises to be one of special interest as Mr. Stadtfeld, the well-known pianist of San Francisco, will appear on the program in two numbers.

"The composer for the afternoon is Frederick Chopin, and the following program will be given under the direction of Mrs. O. Hartley:

"Life of Chopin, Mrs. Orpa Long.

"The story of 'The Polonaise,' and analysis of 'The Military Polonaise,' Mrs. Fred Nay.

"Duet, 'The Military Polonaise,' op. 40, No. 1, Mrs. J. M. Miller and Miss Mabel Lawrence.

"Song, 'The Maiden's Wish,' Mrs. F. C. Malkmes.

"Nocturne in E flat, op. 9, No. 2, Mrs. B.C. Field.

"An Artist's Revenge, Mrs. Killingsworth.

"Piano solos, Mr. J. Stadtfeld.

"Lithuanian Songs, Mrs. Ralph Platt.

"Letters of Chopin, Miss Edith Harbison.

"Songs (a) 'Bacchanal;' (b) 'Poland's Dirge,' Miss Ethel Jones.

"Piano solo, Mr. Stadtfeld."

A week later, on Feb. 11, The Reporter delivered a long critique of the program, ending with the words "It means a great deal to a musical club, from the standpoint of both pleasure and profit, to hear an artist like Mr. Stadtfeld, and the ladies appreciate his interest in their organization, which led him to assist in a program, and they gave him a hearty vote of thanks."

Besides music, the Saturday Club quickly offered other activities, such as art, drama, child welfare, literature, civics, and home improvement. The ladies operated a night school, held sewing classes, cleaned up parks, planted trees and generally tried to improve the appearance of their hometown.

One of the major achievements of the Saturday Club was the establishment of a library in Vacaville.

While plans for a library or at least for a reading room had been around since the 1850s, only the Ulatis Book Club, founded in 1900, had actually ever been successful. This club, with its 84 members and 137 volumes was eventually taken over by the Saturday Club in 1910. The Saturday Club then formed a committee, chaired by Mrs. Orpa Long, to take charge of plans for a library.

Five years earlier, the Carnegie Library Building fund had offered \$5,000 grants to small towns like Vacaville for the erection of a library. Due to the upheaval following the San Francisco earthquake, an initial effort failed. Until 1910, when the Saturday Club finally

took over, town trustees could not agree on a suitable building site.

This organization of 200 women purchased 400 volumes from the defunct Ulatis Book Club and set up a public library on the corner of Main and Dobbins. The room was financed through private subscriptions, donations and volunteer efforts. It opened on Jan. 4, 1912, with subscriptions available from 50 cents to \$2.

The Saturday Club started a campaign to establish a union high school library district and in the election of November 1912, voters approved a 5-cent property tax to pay for maintenance and book purchases.

At that point, library affairs went back to a board of trustees, R. H. Clark, George H. Sharpe, S.P. Dobbins, Monte Gates and John Montgomery. While some residents proposed to build the new library on high school grounds, the trustees finally decided on a site downtown. In 1914, after the Carnegie Fund increased its grant to \$12,500 under condition, that the city provide the land, the trustees bought the corner lot at Main and Parker streets from Thomas S. Wilson for the sum of \$3,000.

A few months later, with the Carnegie fund satisfied, town officials called for bids. Local builder George Sharpe resigned his town trusteeship to be able to bid on the project. Though his bid of \$11,815 was \$388 higher than that of his closest rival, the trustees awarded him the contract. George Sharpe finished the reinforced concrete building with its typical Carnegie library facade in 1915. A history of the Library was sealed into the cornerstone.

The library stayed in the building for more than 50 years before moving into new quarters on Merchant Street. Today, the Carnegie Library houses Vacaville's Chamber of Commerce.

To this day, the Saturday Club is going strong, confirming Mrs. W. H. Edward's words in the 1920/21 yearbook: "There can be no doubt that the Saturday Club has become a power to be reckoned with in Vacaville, when one hears from various sources that if one wants anything done one should get the Saturday Club to do it. May its power never grow less."

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