

Suisun City the business hot spot

By Kristin Delaplane

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Early businesses were a diversified lot in the mid-1800s.

Suisun City was the place to be in Solano County if you were opening a business. Ferrell & Miller's was a general store in Suisun. It carried a line of furnishing goods, fancy and staple dry goods, clothing, boots, shoes, hats, caps, hardware, crockery, glassware and groceries.

In order to insure a strictly cash business rather than running credit, the store owners cut their prices so that they could meet any competition. They also accepted country produce in exchange for goods.

Pearce & Hall were notable contractors and builders in Suisun City.

Stockmon Bros. was the local drugstore and was located in the Express Building in Suisun City. It carried drugs, medicines and patent medicines as well as books, stationery and fancy articles.

The owners of the Meat Market in Suisun, J.C. Owen and J.A. Peyton, announced they were going to begin closing at 10 a.m. on Sundays. Apparently they had kept longer hours before.

Their competition was George Eichner of the City Market in Suisun who noted that he carried a variety of fresh and salted meats.

The local bakery was run by F.W. Hemsath, who baked fresh bread and made up various confections. Her specialties were cakes and confections for balls, parties, and picnics.

P.J. Chrisler purchased his brother's interest in their fruit and confectionery stand. This Suisun store featured fresh and dried fruits, nuts, toys, cigars and tobacco.

S. Priest operated a House, Sign and Carriage Painting business.

He was located in what had been the Ambrotype Saloon in Suisun City.

P. McElroy News Agent carried Eastern and California papers and periodicals.

He offered to take good wood at market value in payment for Solano Press subscriptions.

T.H. Egan was a tailor in Suisun. He cut and made-to-order men's clothing.

He carried a line of materials and cashmeres, provided a cleaning service and made sewing repairs.

J.B. Shields operated a wagon making and blacksmithing business out of Suisun.

As well as general blacksmithing, he made carriages and wagons and painted them. He warned that any accounts that were 30 days overdue were subject to a monthly 2 percent interest charge.

A furniture store in Suisun carried new furniture and the owner also manufactured furniture and bedding and made repairs to old furniture. He specialized in making fruit boxes to order. He also carried a line of window glass of all sizes.

T.J. McGarvey was located in McGarvey's building in Suisun. He carried tin ware, stoves, lead pipe and pumps.

A.F. Knorf was the undertaker in Suisun. He provided the coffins and a hearse for such occasions.

The agent for the New England Family Sewing Machine was in Fairfield. The sewing machine sold for \$25.

Thomas Marten of Fairfield operated a paper hanging and house painting business.

T.S. Billings of Benicia operated a saddlery and harness business. He carried a line of collars, ships, horse brushes, curry combs and chamois. He also did all kinds of repair work associated with his trade.

J.G. Johnson of Benicia was an agent for Suisun City's Mills Flour. He was a wholesale and retail dealer in flour, grain, hay, produce and wood. His services included free delivery within the city limits of Benicia.

E.F. Gillespie built the first store in Vacaville. His business flourished and in 1863 he advertised that he carried a vast line of goods including all sorts of dry goods, groceries, boots, shoes, hardware, tin ware, and farming utensils.

Human Interest

The Union Engine Co. No. 1 met the second Wednesday of each month at the Engine House in Suisun. One gentlemen gave the following eye witness account of a fire company drill:

The firemen went through their drill with accuracy and promptness and the steam from the company Hunneman engine went higher than the pole in front of Cannon's stable. However when the company was to drill in an operation known as "taking up the hose," things fell apart rapidly. The two in charge radically disagreed as to the modus operandi. The first man appealed to those around in English with a sprinkling of Gaelic words. The second man, Senior Antonio, became very excitable and began gesticulating wildly. This was followed by a spurring of words reportedly in English, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, German and Latin. Nevertheless, those in the crowd knew what he meant and his remarks so offended the first man that he threatened to resign.

Emily Smith divorced William Smith.

Put it down to the demon whiskey. Irishman John O'Marra was beaten up by three men receiving several serious knife wounds.

O'Marra was able to name his assailants, who were picked up, but at the time this event was reported it seemed doubtful that O'Marra would be having any more rounds of liquor or fights; death seemed eminent.

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