

## **Benicia artist dabbled in oils and rescues**

**By Kristin Delaplane**

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In the spring of 1857, a drove of 200 head of cattle passed through Solano County on its way to the mountains.

It was noted that the cattle looked as if a bite or two of fresh spring grass would do them no harm.

A few firms were going out of business. G. Egan of Vallejo was leaving for the East. He advertised the Bowling Saloon as a "splendid opportunity for a bargain."

Located on Georgia Street opposite the Washington Hotel, it featured four alleys in mint condition, bar and fix-ures. Inquires were to be on the premises next to Greeve's Brick Building.

Vallejo was showing signs of growth, as 10-acre lots were being settled on the hills with houses and barns being constructed.

Another party going out of business was F.P. Weinmann, longtime proprietor of the Solano Hotel. His terms for the hotel were cash in hand and "no grumbling."

Also for sale in Benicia was the house known as White Hall at A and 1st. The lot it was on was 50 by 50 feet on A street and 75 feet on 1st Street.

Meanwhile, the American Hotel in Benicia was closed, the property having been seized - probably for non-payment of taxes.

A few ranchers were also moving on.

Nathan Doane held an auction at his ranch.

Doane was selling off seven head American cows, eight head beef cattle, 14 head heifers, 26 head yearlings, six head of horses, one horse wagon and harness, and one cart and harness.

The sudden death of Vallejo's W. Edwin Collier, M.D., in Benicia was reported.

The doctor checked into the Solano Hotel and was seen having two drinks at the hotel bar. He soon fell asleep in a chair by the fire in the public room.

When the staff was closing for the night, they attempted to waken the doctor and have him retire to his room. He refused to go, growing violent and abusive.

Finally a bed was prepared in the hall, and after much persuasion, Collier was induced to lie down, whereupon he immediately became sick.

A bystander put the doctor on his side, and he seemed to feel better.

A short time later someone checked on the gentleman, only to find that the 50-year-old doctor had died.

Dr. Peabody of Benicia concluded it was apoplexy, but the official verdict claimed death was caused by excessive intoxicating liquors.

Many people thought at the time that a more thorough investigation would have rendered a different verdict.

Collier was born in New York and had been with the Navy as a medical officer. He had resided in Vallejo for two years, developed a successful practice and was well-thought-of by those who knew him.

Two portraits of well-known citizens were on exhibition at J.W. Jones' drugstore. As works of art, the paintings were said to possess a beauty to detail and finish.

The artist's name was C.W. Pease, and at the time of this report he was then engaged on another portrait.

Citizens were advised that those wishing to have their likeness captured on canvas could not contact with a better artist.

This was the same Mr. Pease who was noted for rescuing drowning people from the straits.

In 1855, the sailboat Lizzie was coming into her moorings and capsized. The two men on board narrowly escaped drowning because Pease rescued them.

Pease came to the rescue again that Christmas Eve. He heard a cry for help and proceeded to the beach.

Here he found an intoxicated gentleman up to his neck in mud. Pease and a Capt. Lewis rescued the man.

Apparently, Pease had a relative equally adept at rescuing people.

In 1856, a boat capsized in the straits near the steamboat landing, and the men who had been on board would have drowned had not Peter Pease jumped in a boat and rescued them.

In the spring of 1857, the citizens of Benicia turned out despite the rain to view the landing of a troop of U.S. Dragoons and watch the company of 50 men as they marched to their barracks.

Bishop and McKnown, producers of Ambrotype photographs, were last mentioned as operating out of Suisun City. In 1857, they returned to Benicia, setting up shop once again above Nurse's jewelry store.

A legal notice came out summoning Rockville's W.D. Brown to appear in court in an action brought against him by Thomas M. Page and Thomas Parish, the pair suing to recover \$108.33 owed them.

Brown's property was seized until the court date. His property consisted of a bay horse and Brown's Shop, situated in the town of Rockville.

The Russian store ship Dwina came to Mare Island for repairs. The Russian officers were entertained with a party at Capt. Farragot's residence.

There was increased construction activity on Mare Island at the time.

A wharf was being constructed for the landing and discharging point for the powder magazine.

An additional storehouse was being built, along with two more blocks of dwellings and a pitch-kettle house for ship-building purposes.

In the plans was the installation of gas works to light the yard, shops and dwellings. Preparations were also being made for the artesian well-boring.

The quarry of Washburn and McLatchy was in operation in Vallejo.

Stone was taken out in slabs 2 to 6 feet in length, 1 to 4 in width.

These slabs were intended for the Navy yard's use.

In Vallejo, the partnership of Wyatt and Brownlee (a k a Brownlie) was dissolved.

Brownlee was to continue in the livery stable business alone.

John Brownlie was the nephew of Robert Brownlee, one of Vallejo's first settlers in the early 1850s. At that time Robert Brownlee had a minimal dwelling, from which he operated a milk ranch.

A correspondent went to Suisun and reported that the fields in Suisun were lush with wheat, barley, oats and corn. Trees in the orchards were overburdened with blossoms, especially peach.

Suisun City was noted as improving with the construction of a brick house and a few small frame buildings. But there was room for improvement. "What a pity the site of this city was laid in this mudhole," the Solano County Herald said.

An obstruction to the free navigation of the harbor at Benicia was an "old hulk" that had sunk.

A notice was issued to alert the owners to remove it within 30 days or it would be removed by the city at the owner's expense.

Stray boats were not uncommon. A ship's boat measuring 17 feet by 7 feet was picked up at the mouth of the Carquinez Straits.

The town of Benicia was crowded with strangers that spring, the majority from the valley attending court. Consequently, the town's hotels were doing a good business.

There was a bar in the Sacramento River near its meeting with the Suisun Bay.

This bar was known as the Hog's Back and it was rapidly increasing in size, extending across the mouth of the slough.

Because of this, steamboats and sailing vessels had always passed through this slough, the river being not navigable at this point.

With the washing of the mountains being deposited on the bar, it was feared that the large riverboats would soon be prevented from going beyond the city, and steamers of lighter draft would need to be used between Sacramento and San Francisco, unless prompt measures were taken to clear the channel of the deposits.

Miscellaneous items from the 1857 newspaper included the information that there was a stable in Benicia called Forbes and Beveridge's. D.F. Beveridge was also the city marshal.

There was an auction held that spring at the wharf.

The goods probably came from the barracks, as they included one case of camp bedsteads, two baskets of glue, two boxes of tartaric acid and two saddles.

The owner of Burkardt's Restaurant, Max Burkardt, was offering for let a well-finished and commodious cottage dwelling house situated on 1st near the Masonic Hall.

Another restaurant in town was named Willard's.

For 25 cents a sheet, the people of Benicia could buy "The Local Song" as it had been sung by Mart Taylor to crowded houses.

Information was wanted of Frederick McDonald by his brother William who resided in Benicia.

William McDonald had not heard from his brother since 1851, when he saw him in San Francisco.

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