

In 1857, traffic accidents involved horses

By Kristin Delaplane

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Toward the later part of the summer of 1857, the Bray's Minstrels, a celebrated band, performed at the courthouse in Benicia. It was followed by the Excelsior Theatrical Group, which performed two nights running. It was quite a large company, capable of putting on skits and plays with a good number of characters.

In a real-life drama, a girl, 14 years old, ran away from her mother's home in San Francisco. She made her way to a disreputable house in Vallejo. Found, she was being escorted back to San Francisco by way of Benicia.

However, upon reaching Benicia, she took off. Her flight was short-lived, as she was once again tracked down and returned to Benicia. As it happened, her stepfather was temporarily living there and, with the consent of Justice Cellers, she was transferred to his care until the next boat to San Francisco, which she was to board. This did not occur. Instead, she appeared in a play at the courthouse that very evening.

Benicians celebrated the Fourth of July with a procession through town to the Presbyterian Church. The procession included the Marine Band, the Solano Fire Co., officers of Pacific Mail Co., Army officers and citizens. The Marine Band played, the Honorable Paul Hubbs read the Declaration of Independence and an orator delivered a speech.

On leaving the church, the procession met the Marine Rifles of San Francisco and Sutter Rifles of Sacramento at the wharf and escorted them to a place for target shooting. The number of strangers who came to town that day numbered 767. The number of meals devoured by these outsiders came to 1,083.

St. Catherine's Academy for Young Ladies began advertising in the paper. It was noted by the editors that the building was one of the ornaments of Benicia, beautifully enclosed, well-ventilated and had the only handsome garden walks in the city. The school was under the supervision of the sisters of St. Dominic, a community celebrated throughout world as teachers. In the year 1857, the school was presided over by Mother Mary Goemere.

Straw bonnets trimmed with pink or green ribbon were worn as part of the school uniform, which consisted of a dress with a loose cape. The uniform was worn on Sundays and for festivals. Otherwise the girls wore their own clothes.

Each pupil who boarded supplied three pairs of sheets, six towels, six napkins, two sunbonnets and a silver fork, spoon and goblet.

The cost for room-and-board was as follows: Reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography with maps and globe, history, composition, natural philosophy, astronomy, embroidery, tapestry, beadwork, plain sewing, \$225. Washing, if done at the institution, \$25. French and Spanish, each quarter, \$15. Music on piano forte, quarterly, \$30. Drawing, per quarter, \$15.

A calico party was planned to benefit the pastor of the Presbyterian church. The band attached to the U.S. military station played for entertainment and dancing. Refreshments were provided at restaurant prices by a Mr. Burkhardt, a restaurant owner. Tickets admitting a gentlemen and two ladies went for \$5. Each additional lady and child was \$1 each.

There was also to be a festival in Vallejo for the benefit of the Methodist church.

Joseph Summers opened a new spring of water near Judge Hastings' house in Benicia. It was said to equal or be better than any water in Benicia. He sold by the load, month or year.

A young man named Frenchie, who was employed at Forbes & Beveridge's Livery Stable, was kicked in the face by a horse in Sulfur Spring Valley. It was thought at first he would lose his eye, but it later seemed unlikely that would be the case.

Another tragedy occurred when some boys were playing on the new road leading to the Pacific Works. A hunk of land caved in on them, killing young Frank Malone. Judge Hasting's son sustained two broken ribs. Mr. Bassford's son was only slightly hurt.

Traffic accidents always made the news. A fractious horse took fright on First Street, setting himself free from a set harness, wagon and driver. The driver was thrown and received a double blow from the wagon and a post on D Street. His body stopped some 30 to 40 feet from where he started. Amazingly he did not suffer serious injury.

Mr. Weinmann, proprietor of the Solano Hotel, was riding in a buggy with a couple of children when their horse became suddenly frightened going down a side hill and took off at full speed. Weinmann managed to lift one of the children out of buggy and then held the other in such a position that it was not injured. The buggy broke up in pieces and Weinmann was brought home in a "state of insensibility." He was soon seen about town, but his face was severely swollen from the fall.

In another accident, a horse and cart belonging to D.N. Hastings backed over the

wharf. All rescue attempts proved futile.

Those citizens of Benicia who were in favor of advancing the cause of temperance met in the Sons of Temperance Hall above the Solano Herald office. At this meeting, it was resolved to make an attempt at counteracting the influence of "King Alcohol" by holding weekly assemblages.

Correspondence from Barton's Store in the upper Suisun Valley indicated suspicious circumstances. A dark brown horse marked "81" on its hip was found in the bushes. It was supposed it was a Spanish horse about 6 years old. A couple of men watched the horse that night, and not seeing any claimant, put him in a stable. The next day a man claimed the horse, saying he had purchased the animal from the person who had left him in the bushes. Yet the horse appeared to have been ridden very hard, as he had a sore on his back and was nearly famished for want of water. The Herald was notified so that an item could be run to alert any person who may have lost such an animal.

A drove of "blooded" cattle left Missouri for S.W. Long's Vaca Valley ranch. His intentions were to improve the stock of his California strain.

The polls were set to open for an election: In Benicia the polls were at the courthouse; Vallejo at the Eureka Hotel; Green Valley Township at Charles Pittman's in Cordelia; Suisun Township's 1st precinct at Barton's Store with inspector Thomas Maupin on hand; the 2nd precinct was in Suisun City at John W. Owen's house; the 1st precinct of the Vacaville Township was at David Dollarhide's house in Vacaville; the 2nd precinct was at Elijah Silvey's in Silveyville; the Tremont polls were at J.B. Tuft's; the homes of Nurse and brother and Mason P. Caswell served the Montezuma Township.

Vallejo's Mary McFarland, married to Robert, put out a notice that she intended to run a dry goods and fancy goods store. Her competition was to be Mary Jane Mullins, wife of William P. Mullins of San Francisco, who announced she was going to carry on a business as sole trader in fancy dry goods in Vallejo.

In Benicia, Spanish was being taught by Mr. P. Cook, a professor of modern languages. His evening classes were \$10 for 12 lessons.

Also in Benicia, Mr. Gudeon recommenced his dancing school in the Assembly Hall at the courthouse. Classes for gentleman were on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from 8 to 10 p.m. Lady's classes were on the same days from 3 to 5 p.m. Men paid \$5 for six lessons and ladies paid \$5 for 12 lessons.

Private lessons at Mr. Gudeon's house were \$10 for five lesson. At a client's house, it was \$10 for four lessons. In addition to learning the steps, all that related to "etiquette

and manners of the best society” was also taught.

Madame Gudeon used a portion of the house for her dressmaking business, advertised as “Fabrique des Robes.”

In river traffic news, the steamer Carquinez, which operated between Benicia and Martinez, was thoroughly overhauled and painted. It made two trips across straits every hour. The fare was \$1 round trip.

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