

Attempted-murder plot shakes Vacaville

By Kristin Delaplane

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A chimney in Capt. Walsh's house set off a fire there. Chimney's in those days often were the cause of fires. The fire roaring through the chimney would continual weep the sand (or mortar) out between the bricks. Pretty soon the flames would find an opening between the unmortared bricks, and the next thing you knew there was a fire in the attic.

Fortunately, in this case, the fire was caught in time and the fire company's services were not required. A good thing too, as it turned out. The firemen would have proved useless, as there was no water to be had in the neighborhood.

This situation was an opportunity for the editors of the Solano County Herald to remind the citizens of the necessity of making sure there was enough water available at all times fro just such an emergency.

Mrs. R.J. Wood placed a notice in the paper that she had lost a small paper bundle containing a collarette and sleeves on the road from Benicia to Major Marshall's. She offered the finder payment for his trouble if it was returned.

A strayed or stolen cow was also being sought. A red cow with a white face and double cut on her right ear had been missing for seven months from the premises of Pedro Torelli at Dr. Peabody's milk ranch.

It seems there were several farms located in the Sulfur Spring Valley five miles from the city of Benicia. A farm in that valley was listed for sale in the fall of 1857.

The good citizens of Solano County did not always pay their bills on time and it was customary for them to be sued for the money.

Ralph Faville was summoned to appear at the Suisun Township. He was being sued for labor done by Elisha Spiva, whose bill came to \$150.75.

Charles P. Goff, a Vacaville attorney, was suing Orrin Root to recover \$40 in fees. And there was the case of Patrick Casseday who was to appear before the court regarding \$65 for medical attendance by Mr. R. Fowler of Montezuma Township.

Folks in Benicia and Vallejo were set to attend a fair in Vallejo being held to raise funds

the proposed cemetery. This appears to be the Carquinez Cemetery which may be viewed today.

The Honorable Paul K. Hubbs was holding a sale of his household goods at his place, which was located next to the Rev. Mr. Woodbridge's church. Col. Hubbs was said to be heading off to Tuolumne County to pursue quartz mining.

Among the items he was selling were Brussels carpets, an elegant bureau with mirror, tables, chairs, maple and walnut bedsteads, mattresses and feature beds and bedding, parlor and kitchen stoves and kitchen and dinning room furniture. He also had up for sale 250 claret bottles, demi-johns, a bathtub and a collection of California newspapers from 1852 to 1856.

Before Hubbs departed from the area he married Maggie, daughter of the late James Gilchrist of Edinburgh. They were married by Rev. Sylvester Woodbridge, Jr. (In a few years time, the Hubbs returned to settle in Vallejo.)

The gentlemen photographers McKown & Bishop were set to leave Benicia. Before departing, they took their equipment to Vallejo, for the citizens there and then returned to Benicia for one last week of business before they relocated to San Francisco at Clay and Kearney streets.

Vacaville's tranquility was disrupted that fall by a failed murder plot. "Our quiet little town was thrown into feverish state of excitement by an attempted assassination of R.H. Vance, the well-known daguerrean photographer." Vance had retired when at 11 o'clock the household was aroused by several men who were disguised and armed. They struck a light and pointed a pistol at Mr. Vance. Vance seized an opportunity and began grappling with his assailant. In the endeavor to wrench the pistol from him, it discharged, wounding one of the disguised men. The group immediately fled and Vance, in his night clothes, sought refuge at a neighboring ranch.

Vance was in the process of closing title on a large tract of land, which had also claimed by several other settlers. This had caused considerable problems, with all parties trying to occupy the land. It was therefore assumed this led to the attack and the parties involved in the land dispute were promptly arrested.

However, due to lack of evidence, they were discharged almost as soon, except for Stephen A. Purdy, who declined to be questioned and was held on \$1,000 bail.

Then four other men, who had no dealings in the land situation, became suspects and were arrested. The finger was apparently pointed to these four based on evidence given by a man named Wallace, who was a profound enemy of the parties. Bail was

soon posted for all including Purdy. Popular opinion was that none of those arrested were guilty, as nearly all could prove being elsewhere during the time in question and they also were in possession of irreproachable character.

Coincidentally, shortly after that episode, Elizabeth Jan Purdy, wife of Stephen, announced that she would be transacting business as a sale trader in farming and raising stock, hogs and poultry in the Vacaville Township.

Back in the lower part of the county, Alta Telegraph Co. erected a branch line from Benicia to Vallejo, which was called the Benicia Vallejo Telegraph. This line was mainly put in place so Mare Island workers could communicate with the outside world.

The Solano Hotel, which had been advertised for sale sometime back, was once again put on the market. This time the terms stated that if it did not sell, it would be up for rent and the furniture, etc., would be sold off.

St. Dominic's Church in Benicia was due a face lift and sought plans and specifications from a San Francisco architect. Improvements were to include the entire finish of the interior, the walls and ceilings to be lathed and plastered, a wainscoting to run around the interior above the pews and below the windows and the walls to be strengthened by additional bracing and the durability of the plastering.

An elegant effect was to be the introduction of half columns on the Grecian order between the windows. Then the windows were to be trimmed with an appropriate Grecian finish. Proposals were being received for plastering and carpentry work.

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