

Early Solano was off to races for holiday

By Kristin Delaplane

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In 1864, for the Forth of July, Benicia had a two-mile horse race, starting at the Solano House, for a purse was \$200 and a boat race between Fanny of Suisun and Lightening of Benicia. The boat race started at the Montezuma Slough and ended at the Benicia wharf.

A Sacramento Star correspondent reported on the doings at Collinsville: "Consists of a grocery on wharf and house 3/4 mile back. Whisky is one bit per dram. On the boat, it's twice that sum. . . . Boys set off Chinese crackers. The Collinsville cadets were to have a dress parade."

In Suisun and Fairfield, flags were flown on many of the masts of the vessels in the harbor, the armory building, Union Hall, fire engine house, City Hotel, Suisun City Mills, Morris's shop, Peko's Vegetable Depot, the Solano Press office, Capt. Waterman's residence and Capt. Boynton's.

In Suisun, the fire bell rang in the morning and the anvil in the plaza was fired. In Fairfield, the church bell was rung.

The Suisun Light Dragoons drilled for an hour, followed by a dress parade in Fairfield with the Vallejo band. Then the public gathered at the church for a speech. The schooner Mary Elizabeth Anderson took passengers on an excursion to the Potrero Hills. The dragoons ate a meal at Shorey's City Hotel. Shorey provided ice cream and more that evening in the supper rooms of the Morris Building.

The dragoons hosted a military dress ball that lasted from nine to dawn.

From Suisun City came the following news items.

Willson and Zoyara's Great Circus, featuring performing horses, ponies and mules, was set to give a Saturday evening performance, however, the show was canceled by the sheriff due to several skirmishes that had occurred.

The Mary Elizabeth Anderson, on her way to San Francisco, broke her rudder at the mouth of the Suisun Slough.

Photographer Deloss Welch set up rooms in McGarvey's Building. T. J. McGarvey

operated a tin shop on the lower floor.

Meanwhile, McGarvey offered to lease a right-of-way for the Union Fire Engine Co. to reach their building, but the land was thought to be public property.

H. Hason operated a furniture business in Suisun. As A.F. Knorp had operated a similar business for some time and had advertised it for sale, it may be Hanson bought Knorp's business.

As Knorp had in the past, Hanson made and repaired furniture and made coffins to order.

However, the sale of the Knorp's business is in question as it was reported that Mr. D.T. Truitt opened a school in the building formally occupied by Knorp as a furniture store. Tuition was set at \$2.25 a month.

Suisun's Dr. Coffron concocted a preparation for the cure of rheumatism, neuralgia and pain, which he was selling at his office and at P. J. Chrisler's general notions store.

P. J. Chrisler purchased J. W. Hutchingson's interest in the Suisun Newspaper Agency and expanded the inventory to include a number of domestic and Eastern newspapers and magazines.

John Doughtry had an offer to rent the former Eagle Hotel as either a residence or business. William J. Morris was offering to rent his brick building to a saddlers and harness business.

Included in the deal was a dwelling house. The Anderson Livery Stable on Solano Street was sold to R.B. Canon for \$1,500. Canon in turn leased the business to a Mr. Wilson.

A bell was purchased for the Catholic Church. Rev. W.R. Gober was leaving as the pastor of the Solano Street Church, a Methodist Church.

An stageline, operated by J. Swinney, was started from Napa to Sacramento via Suisun. That made three stagelines running to Sacramento from Suisun. Swinney's enterprise folded within a month or less.

Meanwhile, Cutler refused to carry mail from Benicia to Suisun on his stageline, as the company received no pay from the government

Even the peace officers had trouble keeping the peace. Deputy Sheriff Apgar and Constable Loomis had a fight in front of Frank & Co.'s general merchandise store. Both drew weapons. Bystanders put a stop to the fight before anyone was injured.

Thieves broke into W.T. Kennedy's store, stealing some tobacco and a bottle of Schiedam Schnapps.

From Fairfield came these news items: Henry DeCastro, an aged man, was thrown from a buggy near the courthouse in Fairfield and was taken to Allison's Hotel to recoup.

Thieves broke into Allison's Hotel and made off with some provisions. Then they broke into Spaulding's saloon and took some whiskey. Their next stop was Williamson's store where they took a gold watch, underclothing and some other minor articles.

In another incident, Mrs. Potter was convicted of petty larceny and sent to the county jail for 10 days.

In San Francisco, the Suscol land cases were in the courts.

One hundred and eighty people were claiming pieces of the vast grant.

From the Suisun Valley area came the following newsworthy items:

L.B. Abernathy (aka Abernathie) had the largest income in Solano County in 1863 with \$5,234. His tax bill was \$157.02.

In Rockville, the James' two-year old son died after he was kicked by a horse.

Judge Weston was growing cotton. Two droves of sheep from Monterey - 10,000 head and 3,000 head - passed through on route to the Russian River. One of the droves had crossed at Collinsville.

John M. Keeney and Alexander Blake were hauling wood when they came to Hamilton Yates farm where they stopped to open and shut a gate. Seeing them, Yates came out of his house carrying an piece of iron.

On his way toward the men, he additionally armed himself with a sizable rock. When he got within talking distance, he addressed Keeney saying,

"You have been lying a good deal about me lately and I have a good mind to knock you off that wagon."

Keeney got off the wagon picked up an equally sizable rock and pulled out a knife. He challenged Yates saying,

“Come on.”

This stopped Yate, but he threatened Keeney if he didn't stop talking about him. The incident was reported and Yates was arrested. He was later released on \$500 bond.

Then came the news from Vallejo:

The residents, who formed “The Old Folks Concert Co.,” gave a concert for the Sanitary Fund, a fund to benefit the Union effort in the Civil War. Bouquets and other articles sold at auction.

A member of the Patriotic Women of Vallejo shared a letter she wrote about the event.

“. . . Goodly share of loyal women as manifested by our late patriotic concerts gotten up by the ladies of Vallejo. The excitement last night ran high; bouquets were showered upon the singing ladies and the audience called for them to be sold for the benefit of the occasion. Mrs. CA and Mrs. CH acted the part of auctioneers and the bouquets sold for 5, 6, and 10 dollars a piece, the purchaser always donating them back again until they brought \$70; so with Mrs. K's, Miss T's and Miss P's, the whole amount to over \$300. The tickets sold amounted to over \$700 for the 2 nights. On motion, it was agreed to meet again tonight. I have a \$5 bouquet on my table and I wonder if some people's hearts are not larger than their estates; they certainly did well for so small a place . . . Enthusiasm ran high. They stamped and cheered until the building shook on its slender foundation.”

Henry Connoly, proprietor of Vallejo's Washington Hotel, became a hotelier of note when he acquired the Solano Sulphur Springs. Located three miles from Vallejo, the waters were touted as the best for invalids.

Connoly built a commodious hotel landscaped by an orchard and vineyard.

Capt. Harrison, pilot at Mare Island, received a patent on an improvement in his caveat upon his eccentric pump.

The Vallejo Hook and Ladder Co. was making plans to celebrate its anniversary in September with a parade and a ball.

A watch was stolen from the house of A.J. Hoyt, four miles from town. George Weber was arrested as he was getting ready to board a boat for San Francisco. As the watch

was found in his possession, he was carted off to the Fairfield jail.

Out of Benicia came these items:

J. G. Johnson, agent for the Suisun City Mills, was a wholesale and retail dealer in flour, grain, hay, produce and wood.

He made delivers in town free of charge. T. S. Billings operated a saddlers and harness shop on 1st Street. He carried collars, whips, horse brushes, curry combs, chamois, etc.

The grand jury indicted Capt. E. A. Poole of the steamer Yosemite and his pilot with intent to commit murder.

The Yosemite had run into the steamer Washoe at the Benicia wharf. The Washoe's pilot, Enos Fauratt, lost his leg. The clear impression was the that the collision was deliberate and the citizens of Benicia, in sight of the Yosemite, hung an effigy of Capt. Poole by the neck and burned it.

Out in Maine Prairie, someone attempted to break into Deck & Co.'s store in Maine Prairie. The noise alarmed the people who lived in the building and Mr. Wilcox, proprietor of the saloon next door.

The thief was pursued by Wilcox. On passing the meat market, Wilson jumped in, got a butcher's knife and then returned to his pursuit. But, by now, the thief had too great a head start and escaped.

In Vacaville the news was about the new bridge over Ulatis Creek and the fight between George Rogers and Carter and Dr. Asa Perdue and son.

Jasper Perdue, 12-years old was badly beaten up by Carter. All parties were arrested, but the case was dismissed.

The Putah Creek residence of William Culbertson burned down. Two houses owned by H. Rush in the Potrero Hills were burned and arson was suspected.

For five dollars, the Collinsville Land Co. offered excursions to Collinsville from San Francisco including a picnic.

In July, a report came from Green Valley that Mary Eliza Parker, aged 17 and 11 months, met a cruel end at Dingley Mills. She had joined a group visiting the mill to see its operation. Mary's dress was caught in the revolving shaft and she was hurled to her

death.

Since the death of her father that past January, Mary had been the chief support of the family - her mother and five siblings - working as a compositor in the office of the Pacific Monthly in San Francisco. She and her family were visiting friends in Green Valley when they went to the mill. On her 18th birthday Mary was to be married to Eugene Lehe, a chief bugler stationed at Fort Alcatraz.

When the accident occurred, he was in route on the steamer Princess to join the family. As no one was able to reach him, he arrived at the Green Valley house where Mary's dead body lay.

The funeral took place at the Stone Church in Rockville.

In Rio Vista, Sam Carr was wounded by J.W. Reeser. The two had a long-standing feud. Reeser was discharged in a charge of intent to murder, but he was fined \$35 for carrying a concealed weapon. It was at this time that he sold his entire stock of cattle to J.J. Priest.

The barge, Monitor, bound for Sacramento burnt and sunk two miles below Rio Vista. It was carrying 30 tons of hay and a wagon worth \$300 and was being towed by the steamer Christina. The two men on the barge started throwing bales into the water when they discovered the fire, but the winds picked up and the men jumped overboard. They clung to the rudder until the freighter neared the shore and then the one man who could swim dragged this companion to the shore.

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