

Plenty of crime in Solano County in 1864

By Kristin Delaplane

Sunday, July 20, 1997

The State Fair was on and Solano County's Fred Werner was proudly showing Billy Clifton, 5 years, and Jim Clifton, 6 years. Both were sons of the celebrated trotting stallion, Rattler, who was then deceased.

Solano County was now included in the San Pablo Bay Agriculture Society. J.B. Frisbee and Charles Ramsey were elected the directors from Solano County.

At the site of Jabez Hatch's Pioneer Stable in Benicia, there was a U.S. government sale featuring six horses and six mules.

Suisun City's Dr. Coffran was noted for his compounds. Among those he made up were cough, croup, dysinteria and worm syrups. He also made pills for the stomach, anti-bilious pills, and rheumatic and neropathic bitters. He also provided ointments and plasters.

Not limiting his practice to general physician, Coffran also cleaned, filled and extracted teeth, but he had competition in this profession.

W.H. Stanley, a dentist from Vallejo, had made arrangements to to be in Suisun every Wednesday and Thursday and provide his services at M.A. Wheaton's residence on Solano Street.

Unfortunately, later in the year, the rains and storms came with such a fury that the roads were made impassable, and Dr. Stanley was forced to cancel his plans, at least for the time being.

Crime was back.

The constable from Benicia brought two prisoners from that city to be housed in the county jail. One was charged with vagrancy, the other with treats against another's life.

David Ward, George Weber and Charles Weber were all convicted of grand larceny and taken to San Quentin by Solano's Deputy Sheriff Apgar.

Sheriff Hall of San Jose captured Joe Pierce, who was wanted for shooting Dr. J.C Ogburn at Silveyville a couple of years before.

In 1863, the news from Silveyville included an item about the new secesh (sessessionst) newspaper, The Banner of Liberty. It was being published by Pierce, Walker and Miner.

Publisher William J. Pierce was the father of Joe C. Pierce who very nearly murdered Dr. Ogburn the previous fall. After the shooting, J.C. Pierce fled and escaped capture by the authorities.

There was further crime in Benicia when thieves broke into Houghton's office and took items from his safe.

About a month later, Capt. Lees of the San Francisco Police Department got possession of some of the silverware stolen from C.B. Houghton and the items were returned to their owner. The silverware was valued at \$350.

Benicia's A.L. Styles had his boat the Neville stolen about that same time Houghton's office was broken into.

Homer LeFever of Rio Vista was in Sacramento when he was found guilty of carrying a concealed weapon and fined \$20.

Crime even permeated the Benicia Barracks.

A company of soldiers enjoying their breakfast and morning coffee one morning when they fell sick due to poisoning. Someone had induced poison in their coffee or food. Eighty soldiers were affected.

While no one died, 30 soldiers were seriously ill. The case was investigated and the water contractor fell under suspicion and he had fled from the barracks.

He was tracked down and brought back, but charges had to be dropped as no evidence was uncovered linking him to the case.

A Finn by the name of Ransquet, living in the Montezuma Township, became "insane" from the effects of too much drunkenness. He was taken to the county hospital and was to be taken care of there for the time being.

John J. Peko, known for his vegetable stand in Suisun City, was robbed when a burglar entered his room and picked his pocket of over \$100 in coin and his elegant brass watch.

E. D. Perkins also had a produce stand in Suisun City and was also carrying fresh

cheese.

Citizens were encouraged to make use the services of photographer Deloss Welch while they could, as he had made plans to leave for Mexico in the near future.

Something changed DeLoss' plans and a month after making that announcement, he added another room to his picture gallery in McGarvey's Building.

Babies were born to well-known citizens. In Fairfield hotel man, J.G. Allison and wife had a daughter. In Benicia, Dr. A. Verhave and his wife had twin sons.

In Vallejo, Naval Lodge No. 87 was giving Grand Masonic Ball Oct. 13 to dedicate the town's new hall. A while later there was a benefit in Vallejo for the new church.

November the word was to get the votes out and the polling places were in readiness: In Vallejo, George Edgar's; in Benicia, the State House; Green Valley, the Pittman Hotel; Suisun City, the courthouse; Vacaville, E.F. Gillespie's store; Silveyville, Silvey's hotel; Tremont, the Solano House; Collinsville, Rankin's store; Denverton, S.K. Nurse's home or store; Rio Vista, the schoolhouse; Maine Landing, King's Hotel; and Caswell's, at Reed's warehouse.

Once Abraham Lincoln was elected, there were a celebration throughout the county. At Blanchard and Yost's Stable in Fairfield was the site for the raising of a Lincoln and Johnson liberty pole, a banner of the United States and three more for Lincoln, and his running mate, Andrew Johnson.

Capt. Waterman, Fairfield's founder, was assisted by vegetable dealer, John Peko, and they hoisted the Stars and Stripes. To this the crowd shouted three cheers. The Lincoln and Johnson banners were hoisted followed by another three cheers.

In Rio Vista, a salute was fired in honor of the Union victories on the battlefields and ballot boxes.

George Clarridge was detailed to fire the anvils with a heated iron rod. At one of the discharges, the ring burst apart and the pieces were blown in all directions. One piece cut off the front of George's hat brim. Another piece struck him in the knee. His injury was serious enough that amputation was being considered.

This may well have been the same George "Clarrage" of Rio Vista whose \$500 was being held by the courts and would be kept if he did not keep the peace for six months.

While the elections had been fairly peaceful that November, in Green Valley it was held

that a good deal of fraud had occurred, because emigrants, fresh from Missouri, had been allowed to vote.

One of Lincoln's first acts was to proclaim Nov. 24 as the date for Thanksgiving, now a national holiday. For this holiday, there was an impromptu ball at the Union Hall in Suisun.

Other entertainment that fall included two vocalists, Dodge and Hayward, who gave a concert in Vacaville and then Suisun.

Dodge was a comic singer and Hayward a singer of popular music. The two also gave a skit, "A New England Thanksgiving."

Samuel C. Gray's store in Benicia was totally consumed by fire. Gray had just returned from the East Coast after a four month sojourn.

In 1855, pioneer Gray established a major dry goods store in Benicia.

He carried boots, shoes, hats, crockery, hardware and cooking stoves and parlor and office stoves.

He also sold farmer's boilers, caldron kettles and flat irons. For clothing items, he had frock coats, black and fancy cassimere pants, velvet, satin and cloth vests, white and fancy shirts, undershirts and drawers, cover shirts, check shirts and overalls.

In 1856, Gray expanded his store to include both staple and fancy dry goods, including clothing for men, women and children, carpeting, clocks, mirrors, trunks and valises, books and stationery.

Apparently, business had been brisk all these years, until this devastating fire.

Builders were encouraged to submit their proposals for the schoolhouse in Suisun City. Pearce and Hall bid \$995, but A.L. White beat them out with a bid of \$897 or \$675 without doing the plastering.

The building was underway and, to raise funds for the school, the ladies of that city were planning a Christmas festival and ball at the Union Hall Dec. 23. Admission was \$1 for adults, and 25 cents for children. Supper was an additional 50 cents.

Mrs. Pearce opened a millinery shop featuring an elegant assortment of goods from dress trimmings, ladies and misses furs, infant clothing, toys of all descriptions, fancy articles, perfumes, soaps, brushes, etc.

It was noted that Vallejo had an excellent library association and that Suisun should also have a public library.

A number of emigrant wagon trains passed through Suisun Valley, most of them bound for Russian River country.

The road was being graded for the Napa and Vallejo railroad. Cabins had been erected along the line to house the labors.

S.A. Shorey, proprietor of the City Hotel, fitted up a bathing room on the premises. For those wishing to immerse themselves, the price was 25 cents.

A short while later, the City Hotel had a new proprietor, S.C. Brainard, having leased it from Shorey. There was to be a restaurant added on with a bar. There bathing room was available during reasonable hours.

The Knoxville/Suisun stage line run by Cutler, had been in operation as of July 1.

It left Suisun at six in the morning, passing through Gordon Valley, Rag Canyon, Berryessa Valley and Sulfur Springs Canyon arriving at Knoxville at six in the evening. Cutler also managed the Fairfield\Suisun City\Benicia stage.

The fall of 1864, the rains were particularly heavy and Cutler was unable to travel on the roads much of time.

The stage from Sacramento on Saturday morning didn't reach Suisun until Sunday evening owing to the awful conditions of the roads.

The body of a marine from the ship, Wateree, was found floating in the straits near Vallejo.

A large number of cattle drowned in the tules in Maine Prairie area.

A well-known dog, Black Prince, noted for his good nature and love of beef, drowned in the tules while engaged in a contest with a powerful coon.

The bridge and road near Pena's were ordered to be repaired immediately.

The tule land around Suisun had completed flooded leaving the town was almost a total island.

The storm knocked the senses out of one Suisun Valley man.

Hestood in the rain all day for fear that his house would blow down. As the paper said, "Comment is unnecessary."

A choir was formed for the Solano Street Church in Suisun and the ladies were holding a calico party to raise money to purchase a melodeon. The calico party was a success.

The tables "groaned" beneath the weight of the food and there was music, a burlesque, singing, turkey, coffee and ice cream.

The Rev. Howlette of Vacaville came down and preached a rousing at the Fairfield Church.

A number of people, who resided in Solano relocated to San Francisco.

Rev. O.P. Fitzgerald succeed Rev. W.R. Gober Suisun Methodist Church South at Rockville for a short time.

Then, Fitzgerald asked to be transferred and he became pastor of the church in South San Francisco on Minna Street.

Miss Lammond, former principal of the Benicia Seminary, was in charge of San Francisco's Silver Street College.

Dr. F. Holmes, formally of Vacaville, relocated to San Francisco as did Dr. Shorb formally of the Benicia Barracks.

Solano's Deputy Sherriff, R.M. Apgar, accepted an appointment of 1st lieutenant and was stationed at the Presidio.

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