

Vaca businesses, families expanded in 1884

By Kristin Delaplane

Sunday, October 19, 1997

The ladies in the Vaca and surrounding valleys had an opportunity when Miss Gardner began giving lessons in lace work.

Her terms were \$1 per lesson or \$5 per term. She gave an exhibition of her talents at Platt's store.

Mrs. A. Williams, conducting a millinery shop, carried underwear, corsets, gingham and fancy aprons, summer hats and bonnets. Those looking for ladies and children's hats were invited to call in at the Band Box. Meanwhile, longtime dressmakers Long and Wiley had their business up for sale.

Another lady following a profession was Mrs. Sophy Servin, who was a practicing midwife in town. She was a graduate of the Royal Institute in Stockholm, Sweden. Her residence was east of the depot.

Among the medics in town were Dr. J.W. Stitt, physician and surgeon, whose office was opposite the Davis Hotel, and Dr. Cunningham, who was having a telephone put in his residence-office.

Other flourishing businesses were as follows:

Hay Sing operated his washing and ironing establishment west of Corn's Livery Stable.

Corn had a new sign hung at the livery stable. A proportion of Corn's business came from furnishing a hearse and carriages for funerals. W.J. Pleasants kept his prize stallion, Black Barney, at Corn's stable two days a week for those who wished to breed their animals with Black Barney.

By now Corn had succumbed to the competition and sold his lumber business to F.B. Chandler. Chandler had been in the lumber business for 13 years in Elmira. Harry Chandler attended Heald's Business College and returned to take over the lumberyard in Vacaville.

H.H. Chandler had plans to build a two-story 82-by-80 building in the Nevada Block. The upper story was to be designated as a hall for parties, meetings, dances and entertainment.

Blum and Hutton seemed to be doing well with their lumberyard and added two. They were, at this time, constructing fruit boxes.

F.B. Tucker, who had leased the canning factory, was expanding and preparing to start a planing mill for the local builders.

O. Garlichs was Solano County's agent for the Pacific Fruit Co. located in Vacaville. They were wholesale and commission dealers for green and dried fruit.

The blacksmiths in town were busy repairing harvesting machinery. Blacksmiths George Powers and J. Black were operating out of their new shop on Dobbins. They specialized in carriage and buggy work. Bennett & Lytle opened a paint shop with Power's & Black. Decorating and paper hanging were their specialties.

George W. Bassford, an efficient wheelwright, was going to conduct the wood shop the blacksmith firm, Donoho Bros.

Craner and Friedman were opening a "cheap cash store," carrying men's furnishings and clothing: boots and shoes, trunks and valises, hats and caps and cigars and tobacco. They were in the building formally occupied by G.N. Platt and Co.'s furniture store.

Morris Stenge, merchant tailor, made suits to order charging from \$18 to \$26 and up. He rented store space also formerly occupied by G.N. Platt and Co. John Bradley of Suisun was going to use part of the store for an ice cream saloon.

John A. Malone of Rio Vista moved to town and opened a boot and shoemaker's shop in an extra room in D.K. Corn's livery stable.

His competition would be Vacaville's A.S. McKay, who had vacated his old location and was building a new shoe and boot shop on Main Street.

Robert Davis purchased Perkins' photograph gallery and relocated the tent from the Triangle lot to a site near the bridge.

Lumberyard tycoon Fred Hutton was building a bakery for his wife on Merchant Street and was installing a large baking oven. His wife had been baking goods for the citizenry for some time.

B. Murphy was opening a restaurant.

G.F. Wooderson and Charles Dutton operated the new butcher shop. They had a

wagon built for delivering meat. James Eversole was the butcher at Rogers and McKinley's.

The B. & P. Saloon & Billiard Hall, operated by R. Bennet, was located on Main Street.

A Chinese merchant offered \$1,000 for a 25-by-40 lot at Dobbins and Main, but his offer was prejudicially refused. T.S. Wilson seems to have answered the call. He built a shop on Dobbins Street for a "China store."

Two crews of Chinese laborers were employed at the brickyard. At least 14,000 bricks per day were being molded. Behind his boarding house, W.C. Hodgins was fitting up several houses for the Chinese in the community.

The Chinese community seems to have suffered its share of woes. Nineteen Chinese were arrested for disturbing the peace. Eleven were sent to jail. Only one was found guilty and fined \$30.

When, a few weeks later, four Chinese were arrested for opium smoking and tried, resulting in a hung jury, the editor said they should either be convicted or the court should offer an abject apology and grant them damages for loss of time and defamation of character.

An Italian and his wife didn't fair too well either. They were arrested for stealing chickens from a place from which they had been evicted. The wife thought the eviction was unjust and took the chickens as their former possessions.

Sinking wells was a profitable business. Platt and Co. had a well sunk in front of its new store. On a nearby farm, two men were hired to sink a well, but when payment was made, one of the well sinkers skipped out without paying his partner. He was captured in Woodland and brought back for a trial.

The general merchandise business was flourishing. M. Blum was making a 25-by-100-foot addition to his store to handle the increase in business. Chittenden was having a building constructed for his new general merchandise store.

Bamberger and Levi (aka Levy) took over G.N. Platt's, keeping the former owner's relative (probably son) Frank Platt on as a clerk.

The general merchandise store Morgenstern and Milnzer had a problem with one of its clerks. Emil Brokowsky had been in its employ for only three months when he was suspected of crookedness. Someone reported seeing him coming and going from the store at unreasonable hours of the night.

Finding out he was on intimate terms with a notorious Suisun female and that she was sporting new items of dress, he was confronted by Milnzer. Emil owned up to thievery.

In the midst of this, Milnzer's attention was diverted and Emil escaped. Having no success in trying to hire a rig, walked to Elmira. Again, having no success in trying to hire a buggy, he fled on the next train to San Francisco.

The Solano County sheriff followed the trail and discovered he had registered at the Occidental Hotel.

Finding his overcoat there, the sheriff waited inside, but Emil never showed. It came out that not only had he taken money and goods from his employers, but he had spent a great deal of time gambling and drinking and in the company of fast women. His debts were in the neighborhood of \$350.

The Odd Fellows held a May Day Picnic at Oiler's Grover. The Elmira Brass and String Band provided the music. The attendance was estimated at 1,500. Sixty gallons of ice cream were consumed.

Elmira's innkeeper, Al Marsten was a vender and prepared a table with tablecloths, knives, forks and spoons and plates and plenty to eat. He attracted at least 800.

The owners of the Davis Hotel were giving a grand ball. Music was provided by a group of musicians from Sacramento. Tickets were \$2.50, which included supper.

Weddings were on the social calendar and one of the social events of the season was the wedding of Nellie Buck and John H. Cory of San Jose. Each of the bridesmaids was given a bouquet with a bracelet attached. The Rev. Alexander of Dixon officiated.

The meal at the reception included turkey, chicken, oysters, sandwiches, salads, jellies, cakes, oranges, candies, nuts, tea, coffee, lemonade, ice cream and champagne.

The grandmother of the groom gave the couple a family Bible. The groom's parents gave the couple a black walnut bedroom set. Jeweler W.E. Lawrence's gift was a bronze clock. M. Blum and wife gave an elegant hand-painted china dinner set, 157 pieces. Other gifts included a satin embroidered tablecloth, a bronze lamp, a pie knife, ice cream spoon and a long list of silver gift items.

That summer there was a fashionable evening wedding out in Pleasants Valley for Frank Huckins and Ella Rhodes. The bride's family decorated the portico with jasmine and passion vines intermingled with roses of every hue. The bride wore a dress of sky blue veiling and velvet trimmed in lace. Lydia Pleasants played the wedding march on

an organ. The guests came from Dixon, Fairfield, Winters and San Francisco.

Nora Long, daughter of pioneer W.B. Long, married Charles A. Stevenson. To everyone's surprise, after the two were pronounced man and wife, they switched place with the groomsman A.V. Stevenson and the bridesmaid Lola Cross of Oakland, and a second wedding took place. When they returned from their honeymoon, A.V. Stevenson and bride occupied the upper rooms of the depot as their place of residence. Undoubtedly A.V. worked for the railroad and was most likely the station master.

Edward Grey captured five foxes in a period of two weeks and these captures were perfectly legal, there were a few who ignored the hunting codes. A \$25 reward was offered by Vacaville's Sporting Club for any leads that led to the arrest and conviction of those violating the game laws.

In an act of kindness, the women in town packed their lunch baskets and made a day of it at the residence of William Morgan east of town. Mrs. Morgan had been ill for several months and the ladies put in a day's sewing to help her.

There was a call for more general housing for families locating in the area. In response, Miss M.E. Elliot was building a house as a rental.

Visitors to Vacaville could be seen wandering the streets looking for accommodations, so the new Williams Hotel was sorely needed. When it opened, W.S. Hinman was the manager. Services included providing a free carriage ride to and from the train depot. Plank sidewalks were put in from William's harness shop to his new hotel on the north side of Main Street. On the south side of the street, sidewalks were laid between The Reporter building and Bamberger & Co.

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