

Local ventures change hands as 1871 begins

By Kristin Delaplane

Sunday, October 04, 1998

A storm in February 1871 covered the hills with snow for a day.

The flagstaff in front of Wilson's stable in Suisun City, which had been standing for more than a dozen years, was knocked down in a severe gust during the storm.

In Vallejo, the office of the CPRC was unroofed, as was Thomas & Hunt's warehouse in that place. The hatches on the steamer Moulton were blown overboard.

The year, 1871, was kicked off with a New Year's Fireman's Ball in Suisun City. Forty-four tickets were sold.

In January, it was reported that two gypsy women, babes in arms, were out in the streets offering to tell the fortunes of local citizens for a small amount of coin.

Former Solano County coroner, A.F. Knorp, who had moved from Suisun to San Francisco to operate a furniture store, was back in Suisun City. He leased the Roberts Hotel. The newspaper reported that he renamed the Roberts Hotel the Pacific House, the name of the hotel he had previously operated in Suisun City.

Knorp employed a number of workmen to put the buildings in thorough order. Gibson, the barber, moved his baths and shaving saloon to the hotel and Knorp put a 60-foot flagstaff so all could find his place.

That May Knorp held a May Day ball, but it was poorly attended as it conflicted with an all-day train excursion to Calistoga and folks were too exhausted to go out dancing. It was never reported what the attendance was to the May Day Ball at Union Hall. The tickets to the soiree, which included supper, were \$3.

R.D. Robbins and David Ferris agreed to dissolve their partnership in the lumber business. Robbins, founder of the business, stayed on.

Professor J.E.M. Gilliard, a "colored" gentleman and an associate editor for the Elevator, a San Francisco newspaper for the black community, delivered a lecture at the Union Hall on "The Future of the Colored American."

Reporting on the lecture, the editors bemoaned the fact that so few had attended as they had missed out on a "really intellectual treat. The lecturer was logical and

eloquent.”

Mrs. M. Field another lecturer was not so well received. When she came to town to give a lecture, “Pulpit, Press & Stage,” she ordered the printing of posters from the newspaper office. When she didn’t pay her bill, the editors got the word out in an editorial. The writer said they did not attend the lecture in the first place because from the manuscript she delivered to them, it was clear she was ignorant of the commonest rules of syntax. The receipts from her lecture amounted to only \$6.25 and when she left the next day, she was unable to pay her hotel bill. Instead she offered them what she had, \$5.

William Keym, the 15-year-old recently who had been arrested for beating up a Chinese boy in late 1870, accidentally shot his brother, Louis, at Keym’s Hotel. Willie was working on the lock of the gun when it went off, shooting his little brother in the knee and hand. Physicians were called and they succeeded in picking the shot out of the lad.

T.H. White and Dr. William Jacobs dissolved their partnership, White purchasing the entire business.

William Vuille, watchmaker and jeweler, took a shotgun and killed himself in the sleeping room he rented in White’s building. Vuille was a native of Switzerland and about 43 years old. He had a wife and children in Switzerland and had apparently been unsuccessful in raising enough money to send for them. Some thought this was the reason for his despondency.

William K. Hoyt informed the authorities that Vuille had been to his place that day suggesting the two take a ride. The rode to Cuff’s Saloon in Fairfield, where they had some larger and cigars. It was at this time that Vuille told Hoyt that he was anxious to get his family out of Switzerland and Hoyt offered to assist him. When they left the saloon, Vuille rode off on his own and that was the last he was seen.

Vuille had lived in Suisun a little over four years. Though he could not speak the English language fluently, he had made friends in the community, was especially well liked by the children, and was said to be quiet and gentlemanly and temperate in his habits.

In a week or so, Marks Hyman set up business as the town’s watchmaker and jeweler in Vuille’s old shop, which was one door south of Stockmon’s drugstore. Apparently, Hyman moved on and watch and clockmaker R.H. Whitherall took over the Vuille’s shop. In April, it was announced that F.W. Stone had purchased the Vuille’s tools and set up shop in White’s tin store.

Dr. A.T. Miller was arrested on a charge of forgery, his bail set at \$1,500. He had

written two letters to prominent citizens, R.D. Robbins and D.M. Stockmon, which had been intercepted and given to the police.

Miller had mailed the letters to a man in San Francisco to mail. The man, being suspicious, opened the letters. These letters were written as though they came from an attorney representing the estate of a man who died in Los Angeles in 1869. The gist of the letters was that Dr. Miller held a note from the deceased man and the men were encouraged to buy said note for whatever price would be accepted by Miller. They could then leave the note at the bank and the estate's administrator would pay them \$1,200 for it.

The "administrator" said he was reluctant to try to purchase the note as he felt Miller put too high a price on it. Miller's wife parted with her watch and jewels to obtain counsel for her husband.

In 1866, Coroner Knorp sold the Cosmopolitan Saloon to Dr. McMahan to be fitted it up as a drugstore. McMahan rented the upstairs room to Dr. James F. Pressley, who in 1871 was one of the doctors for the county hospital in Fairfield. J.G. Pressley was the attorney representing the sale of McMahan's home and was probably related to Dr. Pressley.

Hunt and Wood, residents of Suisun and Fairfield, were giving a series of soirees at the Union Hall for the purpose of teaching ballroom dancing. Couples were charged a dollar. Sessions for children were held the same afternoon as the soirees.

The Oriole Saloon featured a reading room with periodicals and newspapers and proprietor C.T. Canfield was offering Sitka ice for sale. (Sitka is a town of southeast Alaska on the western coast of Baranof Island.)

Asa's Saloon, where English, French and German were spoken at the bar, was up for sale. Asa Crocker, one of Suisun City's first residents, was ready to retire after having been in the saloon business for seven years.

The sloop P.M. Randall burned completely in the Suisun slough. The captains Randall and Amos Hewitt were at anchor when the pair went below to turn in for the evening. They left the usual signal lamp suspended from the rigging.

About an hour and half later, they awoke to flames engulfing the rigging. Their cargo, 42 tons of hay belonging to J.B. Hoyt and valued at \$400, was lost. So too was the vessel, which was the property of Amos Hewitt and Lewis Pierce. It was valued at \$3,000. Chrisler and Smith were laying the foundation for a new brick store on Main Street and in a few weeks moved there with their stock of family groceries. Meanwhile

A. Chrysler (P.J. Chrisler's brother), also in the family grocery business, was fitting up his new building on the southeast corner of Solano and Suisun Streets.

George Green & Co. of the Pioneer Market butcher shop on Main Street bought a hog from George C. McMullen, which weighed 630 pounds. They slaughtered it and sent it to the Benicia barracks.

John Miller, located in Hanson's building, was in the upholstery, spring bed and mattress business. He could repair or make to order spring beds, hair mattresses and lounges and upholster all makes of furniture.

William J. Morris and John M. Hamilton formed a partnership in the saddlerly and harness making business they rented a shop located in the same building as the newspaper office along with merchant Jacob Cohn.

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/675>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/675/>