

A Few Quirks of Interest About Vacaville

By John Rico

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WE READ WHAT WE WANT TO READ - All of us are oriented in our thinking, and find I enjoyable reading in those topics which fit snugly into our pattern. It was Will Rogers who said: "All I know is what I read in the papers."

So, if you want to know a few quirks about Vacaville, tell your friends you first read it in this column. Don't go searching for an encyclopedia because the information printed below cannot be found there:

Let's touch briefly on some local politics. A few days after Vacaville was incorporated back in 1892, the new town council named Frank H. Buck, Sr., as Vacaville's first mayor. He died in 1916. Many years later, his son, Frank Jr., was named Congressman from the local district in the 1932 elections. It was the first and only time that a Vacaville resident has been accorded that honor. Congressman Buck died in 1942, while still our local representative.

Another first came upon the local political scene in 1976 when Carolyn Van Loo and Barbara Jones were elected to the city council, and in 1976 Mrs. Jones became the city's first feminine mayor. Up to 1978, Vacaville's mayors were selected by the five-member city council. In 1978 a direct vote for mayor placed William Carroll in that seat.

Richard Nixon came to Vacaville in his 1950 campaign to be named State Senator. Vacaville voters preferred Nixon over his opponent, Helen Gahagan Douglas. Then in 1968 when Nixon was elected President, Vacaville voters rejected him in favor of his opponent, Hubert Humphrey, but in 1972, local voters again went with Nixon over opponent George McGovern.

Enough said about politics. Despite the fact, and figures to substantiate that Vacaville was one of the richest areas per capita in the nation, the Vacaville High School was without a gymnasium until 1930. Athletes here were envious of Armijo High in Fairfield, which did have a spacious gymnasium. In 1930, voters approved a \$62,000 bond issue to be used for construction of a classroom-gym building. The building was completed and used for about 20 years when it was discovered that many irregularities in construction did not comply with earthquake standard specifications. The brick building was condemned, vacated, and mysteriously burned in 1953.

And speaking about athletes, and with the forthcoming 1980 Olympic games in the offing, it may be interesting to many new residents to repeat the story of Morris Dally of nearby Elmira, who participated with the victorious University of California rowing crew in the 1928 Olympics at Amsterdam. A 1926 graduate from Vaca High, Dally to this date is the only local area resident to have participated in these world-wide athletic contests.

Vacaville has had a fire department ever since there were enough buildings here to present fire hazards. Today, the oldest living volunteer fireman is Earl Brazelton, who joined the department in 1916, the year Vacaville purchased its first mechanical fire engine. Available records show that Louie Mohr, who retired as a volunteer in 1974, is credited with 37 years of continuous service to the department and to the community. That's a lot of smoke eating.

We often talk about "chain" stores coming to Vacaville. The first to invade was the Diamond Match Co. (now Diamond National) which bought out the locally-owned Chandler Lumber Co. far back in 1919. The company's rebuilt plant on Monte Vista Avenue burned to the ground on March 20, 1950, and again had to be rebuilt.

Below are some abbreviated facts about Vacaville which may be of interest:

The first "piped" gas for Vacaville was October 18, 1930. The present Vacaville Theatre was built on a vacant lot back in 1926, and opened on July 30 that year as one of the most elaborate in Northern California, known then as the Clark Theatre.

The library building next door, built with a grant of \$11,000 from the Carnegie Foundation, opened July 17, 1915.

The quaint former Episcopal Church on the corner of Main and West Streets opened in April 1914, and the former town hall on East Main Street was completed in 1907 at a cost of \$3500.

A well known Merchant street landmark, the Vacaville Hotel, opened August 11, 1920. In later years what remained of the building was taken over and remodeled (1937) as the home for the Saturday Club. In 1953, the Saturday Club vacated the building, sold it to the Bank of America. The old Vacaville Hotel, built at a cost of \$50,000, with money raised among local residents, has been demolished.

The grand opening ceremonies for Leisure Town were held in November 1962; the first golf course laid out there was in 1958.

The bridge over Ulatis Creek, at the east end of Main Street, and the one over the

same creek at McClellan, were built in 1911. Total cost of both concrete structures, \$11,500. And the concrete wall along School Street was erected in 1915 at a cost of \$898. Andrews Park, in that vicinity, honors Reporter Publisher E.C. Andrews.

And there was a nut tree at the Nut Tree. It was a black walnut, cut down in February 1951, to permit expansion of Interstate 80. George Akerly was president of Vacaville's first Chamber of Commerce, back in November 1913.

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