

The Buildings Remain, But Not the Names

By John Rico

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THEY CAME - THEY STAYED AWHILE, THEN DISAPPEARED - If you would look at pictures taken following the April 19, 1892, earthquake in Vacaville you can see that many of the buildings damaged during that quake were repaired and are still standing along Main Street.

There have been some changes in structures along that main thoroughfare throughout the past 87 years. Many residents here today have a tendency to assimilate the age of the buildings with the length of time the occupants have also been here, but that is not the case.

Name changes on facades, wall signs, billboards, etc., have radically changed along Vacaville's business rows, especially Main Street in past years.

Although there are no official records, to the Vacaville Reporter goes the honor of being the first which has existed under the same trade name for the longest period of time here. The paper was started back in 1883, and although there have been several owners in the interim, the name has continued for almost a century.

To the Vacaville Drug goes the honor for second in line, having been established by Jim Miller back in 1891, and here again, although there have been several owners along the line, the name has remained the same. To druggist Jim Miller also goes the honor of bringing to Vacaville the first telephone service, back nearly 100 years.

The Nut Tree sign has been blowing in the wind for Interstate 80 travelers since 1921, and ownership has remained in the Power family ever since that founding year, when Ed and Helen Power started to sell fresh figs and watermelons beneath some old prune trays.

The G.C. Linn Insurance Agency name continues here, having been started in 1925 by the late George Linn. The Strauman name first came to Vacaville back in 1927 as a small Main Street shop, branching out in later years to its present Parker Street site.

To Safeway goes the honor of being the oldest grocery store here in continuous service. The name came to Merchant Street in 1928.

And another name constant here since 1919, is Diamond National, the firm having

purchased the Chandler Lumber Co. in that year. But despite the longevity in years of service by the few firms mentioned above, the mortality rate in business circles here has been exceptionally high; attributed to a myriad of reasons.

If you survey the community and see the many grocery stores here today, it makes some of the older residents reminisce back to such names as California Market, Livingston's, Escano & Sons, S. P. Dobbins, Golden West Market, Akerly's, Martha's Cash Grocery, Solano Grocery, Lorenzo's Shopping Center, Waggoner's Cash Grocery, L & C Cash Grocery, Ekonomie Grocery, Gray & Son, Purity Stores and Nay Mercantile. Escano & Sons, which operated a grocery and bakery on Merchant Street, earned many customers by sending a horse and a wagon loaded with groceries for the convenience of rural residents., Later the firm used a truck for that purpose.

Yes, there have been a lot of changes. Bob Scalabrino built the Bridge Coffee Shop on Main Street, on the banks of Ulatis Creek, so that customers could have a view of the creek. Then there was the Valley Cafe, Casa Maria, Vacaville Hotel Inn, Walt's, Ray's Dug-out, Triangle Snack Bar, Jo Jo's, Sam Lum's, Golden State Restaurant, Joe Rossi's Italian Restaurant, and more, plus you could get sandwiches, and ice cream from-the Vaca Valley Creamery, Edwards, the Kandy Kitchen. At Edwards, Bob Thornton always had the bins full of his freshly-made candies.

If you wanted an automobile, there were varied trademarks available. Here are some of the firms and the brands of cars they carried: G. L. Martell Buick, McMillan & Son Ford, E. H. Uhl Chrysler, Dodge, Plymouth, Pigati Chrysler, Owen-Marlor Ford, Vacaville Garage Star, Roulund Motor Ford, Dilley-Uhl Dodge, W. W. Stith & Sons, Durant, R. E. Grattan Nash, Cordelia Garage Graham-Paige, Libonati and Blake Chevrolet, Beelard & Burton Buick, Douglass Motor Co. Pontiac, Konold Motor Ford, Willhart Chrysler, Sutton Motors, Dodge, Stegemann-Mink Pontiac, John Moriel, Buick-Pontiac, Hanger Chevrolet, Hansel Ford, Arlen Dicks Chrysler.

Throughout the years Vacaville has had its share of department stores, all of them being erased from the scene as years rolled on. Most prominent of the lot was Schaefer's Big Country Store, which was forced out of business via a disastrous fire. There was Crystal Bros., Walter's Store, J. C. Penney, Cole & Chandler, George Arnold, W. S. Dobbins, Bolter-Dobbins. J. C. Penney opened its Main Street store here in March 1929, and closed a few years later, during the Great Depression.

You could go into several meat markets and order the cut of meat you wanted. Such markets were City Meat, Pardi's, Pardi and Butt, People's Market, Livingston's.

You could get tires from Cutler & McNallen, and you could get car service from Beelard & Burton, Klotz & Cook, Nay Garage, Roulund Garage, Jim Marshall, D .. A. Mowers,

Clyde' Weldon, John DeFillippi, Stevenson Service, Walt's, and a host of others, At Walt's on Merchant Street, the gasoline pumps were on the street curb, and motorists traveling busy Highway 40 had to make way for cars parked at the pumps.

Schroder & Frahm started Vacaville's first large hardware store. It later became Nay's, then Akerly's, then Collier's, then Cranston's, and now it has all come to an end. Another unique hardware store here was Winfield's. Akerly's boasted: "If you can't find it here there is no use looking further." It was a true statement. You could buy a bar of Grandpa's tar soap, a woodbeam plow or a springtooth harrow from Akerly's. Very few older residents of the community will forget the friendliness prevailing at Collier's.

For medicines there was Vacaville Drug, Reid Drug, Tom Price Drugs, Art Donovan's. At Reid's you could also get a sandwich and a milkshake.

Then there were jewelers Fred Deakin and T.L. Hewitt; Lyons Electric and Art Dietz Electric; Sweeney and Brook & Hawk Pool Rooms; the Wagon Wheel Bar; Chandler-Hurt Furniture; Star Bakery, Barmettler's Bakery; Vacaville Steam Laundry and the First National Bank.

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