

Other Days Of Mourning

By Ernest D. Wichels

Sunday, December 01, 1963

Vallejoans shared the grief of the world and of the nation following last week's tragedy. With heartfelt reverence, our citizens worshiped in their churches, closed shop, displayed the flag in mourning, and many unashamedly cried.

Our Vallejo people have always shown their reverence and their sympathy in such trials. It is accentuated perhaps by the close ties we have with the armed services—and for more than a century our citizens have heard the 30-minute guns fired by the shipyard saluting battery on the occasions of national sorrow.

As our city observed the worldwide day of mourning on Monday, November 25th, we were moved to recall the manner in which similar days of mourning were observed by earlier residents.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Word of the assassin's attack on Lincoln on April 14, 1865, reached the city and Mare Island early the following day by telegraph. On Sunday, April 16th, the navy yard fired 30-minute guns from sunrise to sunset. Yard workmen were excused from work for three days—Monday to Wednesday, April 17th to 19th. Vallejo business houses were closed on Wednesday, April 19th, while the entire community attended public ceremonies. There was a cortege, estimated at "nearly 20 blocks long." Military units from Mare Island and the Benicia Arsenal led the procession, followed by a draped casket on an Army caisson which was drawn by six horses. Pallbearers for the Vallejo cortege were selected from the leading officials and citizens. At the conclusion of the procession, which traversed the area between Pennsylvania street, Sonoma street, Virginia street and the waterfront, there were appropriate ceremonies to reflect the mourning of Vallejoans for their fallen President.

JAMES A. GARFIELD

The Evening Chronicle of July 2, 1881, was printed with all columns of its eight pages outlined in black borders. The first reports received here—and the first story in the Evening Chronicle—erroneously reported that the President was dead. It was not until 79 days later, however, that President Garfield passed away.

There were some civic decisions to be made on July 2 and 3. Vallejo had prepared for

a huge Fourth of July Celebration. It was resolved when the committee announced, early on July 3rd "If the President dies, there will be no celebration; otherwise, the program will be presented."

When telegraph brought the sad tidings of death on Sept. 19, 1881, the Chronicle records that the "bells of the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches were tolled all day." The national day of mourning was observed on Monday, Sept. 26, 1881, and the Chronicle notes that "all businesses will close during the procession followed by exercises in Farragut Hall." The "procession" was in fact a funeral cortege, including a horse drawn hearse, pall bearers, followed by a riderless horse "led by two grooms." The Grand Marshal for the procession was J. K. Duncan, with George Roe as Chief Aide. In Farragut Hall the funeral eulogy was given by the Rev. A. J. Nelson. Prior to the procession there was a union church service and, the Chronicle adds, "all schools will be closed, and there will be no paper."

WILLIAM McKINLEY

On Saturday, Sept. 14, 1901, the newspaper announced the assassination in black bordered columns and said that in Vallejo "all bells toll out a sad refrain." Public services were held on Thursday, Sept. 19, at Farragut Theater with an overflow meeting "at the bandstand on the corner of Sacramento and Georgia streets." Church services were held earlier in the day at St. Vincent's Church and a union Protestant service in the Presbyterian Church. The procession through the downtown streets included six divisions which were representative of all Vallejo official, business and fraternal activities. A catafalque drawn by horses headed the cortege.

The Grand Marshal was O. L. Henderson, and his Chief of Staff was the Hon. J. J. Luchsinger. The "oration was delivered by the Hon. Sam M. Shortridge, who was introduced by J. B. Frisbie." Shortridge later became a United States senator from California.

The names of the Division Captains will be recognized by many present day Vallejoans. They were James Herbert, George Roe, J. R. English, Frank Denio, William Kavanagh and William B. Pressy.

Some one thousand Mare Island workers marched in Pressy's Division, and their "captain" was C. H. Rule, assisted by nearly 20 "lieutenants." These assistants included Thomas B. Dick, Cam Whitthorne, William Greig, Donald Munro, Thomas M. Raines, Alexander Russell, Dan Breslin, John Brough, W. J. Haggerty, David McLean, C. H. Warford, Dave Beveridge.

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

Most everyone is familiar with the national sorrow that followed the passing of FDR at Warm Springs, Ga. While not a violent death in the nature of the others of whom we have spoken, it was keenly felt here and throughout the world because of the clouds of war which hung over us. The national day of mourning was Saturday, April 14, 1945. Most Vallejo business came to a halt; there were memorial services in many churches. But some 40,000 Mare Island employees continued to work—there was still a war to be won!

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/716>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/716/>