

Old Time News Writing

By Ernest D. Wichels

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Like women's fashions, automobile bodies and hair-dos, the style of reporting news also changes with the years. In our research the past few weeks, poring over the century-old editions of our Vallejo newspapers, we have gleaned some amusing stories. The most interesting aspect is that the city editor, in the olden days, always editorialized in his reporting. Today no city desk would dare to do so.

We hope you may enjoy some of these excerpts.

POLITICS

From the Evening Chronicle of Nov. 9, 1870, is this story: "Hon. George Barstow, at present the Federal Postal Agent in this state, is announced as an available candidate for Governor on the Republican ticket. Mr. Barstow is high-minded, liberal to his friends, a strong partisan, and all that he lacks to make him governor is votes enough. Who lacks anything else?"

TRAGEDY

From the same newspaper on the evening of Nov. 15, 1869, there is a story of two Mare Island workmen being pushed overboard from the Ferry Boat Lizzie during the 5 p.m. rush to get home from work. The final paragraph of this news story reads: "A little more exhibition of executive power in this matter may effect a change for the better, and save us the trouble of recording another accident of this character, perhaps fatal in its results."

LAW VIOLATORS

From the Chronicle of Sept. 19, 1881, is this gem of a story, under the headline "Another fracas." "Mrs. Morris, not content with the notoriety already acquired, has commenced on another line. It appears that on Thursday and Saturday of last week, and again this morning, she went into the Naval Chop House at the foot of Georgia Street and conducted herself in a way that made matters very unpleasant to the guests. The proprietor got out a warrant for her arrest for disturbing the peace and she was placed under bonds to appear for trial. We respectfully suggest that action against her has been delayed long enough and that a trial should be had and an effort made to put a stop; to her course of abuse of anything and everything that offends her

discriminating taste. The town has got about enough of her and the quicker she emigrates the better people will be suited."

CHURCH BAZAARS

Considerable front page publicity was given the Episcopal Church Bazaar by the Chronicle on Nov. 14, 15, 16 and 17, 1870. The name of every worker, all prize-winners, etc., made the paper. Here are a few quotes:

Nov. 15, 1870: "There were the usual flitting fairies to tell fortunes, sell tickets, etc. The church fair is preeminently a ladies institution. The ladies inaugurate the movement, their pretty fingers manipulate the many fancy little articles that find a ready sale, they build the tastily decorated stands, and they with that winning and persistent way that knows no denial are sure to succeed in coaxing persons into the purchase of all sorts of articles that visitors never dreamed they wanted."

Nov. 16, 1870: "Among the winners was Admiral Craven, who became the owner of a very unique baptismal font which was auctioned off for \$30."

Nov. 17, 1870: "To prevent any further misunderstanding with regard to the miscalled baptismal font raffled at the recent fair, we have to state that the font was purchased for the use of the church but, proving most unsuitable, was sent to the fair and is now being applied to the purpose for which it was made—a flower vase."

SISTER CITY OF BENICIA

The Chronicle of Sept. 7, 1881, reports a City Council meeting, and ends with these observations: "More and more Benicia pushes into the public notice and asserts for herself a prosperity in business enterprises and growing institutions of a high character and increasing population seemingly inspired with a spirit of progress, and all bent on work for the common weal."

DISGUST

On July 23, 1881, the city editor ended his column of "national news" with these words: "The Eastern newspapers have been printing acres of stuff and giving details from Washington which are so frivolous and utterly insignificant that readers ought to be getting nauseated with them. An enormous amount of trash is being telegraphed to this state. The business has been overdone to an extent that has become disgusting."

THE BIG GAME

The Big Game of 1901 was reported on Nov. 11, 1901, as follows: "The great annual football game goes to the team that was expected to lose. The great intercollegiate football game between Stanford and Berkeley was a decisive, victory for Berkeley. Local interest was given to the game by reason of the playing of Elvizio Mini, a Vallejo boy, on the Berkeley team. He was the lightest man in the game, but the liveliest and `was used whenever it became necessary to make a good gain." Old time Vallejoans will agree that the late "Cap" Mini was one of our finest football players.

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