

# Problems Not New

By Ernest D. Wichels

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Too frequently we read of some “new” development to improve the economy; or hear someone wonder what has happened to modern youth; or see a reference to the shipyard “crisis.” In reviewing the pages of one hundred years of Vallejo newspapers we come to the inevitable conclusion there is really nothing new.

WEST SIDE CANAL—Last week’s local newspapers carried the story, date-lined Washington, D.C., about the west side canal from Corning to Putah Creek. This is a part of the new California water plan and is being supported by our Congressman. Read what the Vallejo Recorder said on February 23, 1867: “Congressman McRuer of this District has introduced a bill to grant 10 sections of land per mile to the Northern Canal Co. which proposes to make a canal for navigation and. irrigation from Red Bluff to Suisun. The estimated cost is \$12,000,000.” On Mar. 16, 1867, the S.F. Bulletin opposed the project, contending that “summer fallow will answer better than irrigation. Sheep and stock owners are entered here and do not need the water for their flocks and herds.”

## NAVAL SHIPYARDS

In 1886 the Secretary of the Navy appointed a commission to investigate the need for naval shipyards, with particular reference to Mare Island because marine repair work could probably be done for less money on the east coast. In 1912 the Secretary of the Navy established two classes of navy yards—first class and second class, relegating Mare Island to the latter. Less than a year later another Secretary, Josephus Daniels, restored our local plant to first class status and approved of an ambitious shipbuilding program. Early in the 1920’s a Naval Board recommended moving Mare Island to the then Alameda mudflats. After a spirited contest in the U.S. Congress, the recommended move was canceled. Last week a high-level Department of Defense team visited the local base for another “look-see.” We liked Admiral Fahy’s recent appraisal of Mare Island’s advantages and the conclusion: “We have what no other shipyard has: The Mare Island team!”

## HOODLUMS

The recent vandalism to new homes and similar reports of irresponsible behavior lead many to comment that something new has been added to make life difficult.

The Chronicle of July 20, 1891, reported: "About ten o'clock Sunday evening Chinatown was seized with consternation by the appearance of 'a tongue of flame issuing from the rear of the store opposite the Solano Brewery (Marin and York). An alarm was immediately turned in and the fire companies responded, but the house was utterly destroyed." It was publicly asserted that the fire was set deliberately by certain youths as revenge on the Chinese owner because he had appeared in court to give testimony against a hoodlum. The sad story is that a 5-year-old girl was burned to death in the blaze.

Seven days later, July 27, 1891, the Chronicle said: "Some means must be devised by the fire department and the local officers to prevent the entrance of hoodlums into dwellings when a fire is in progress. Such persons are neither useful or ornamental, but on the contrary are a nuisance in every sense of the word. What the flames do not ruin is immediately made off with by the hoodlums. Petty thievery forms a part of their 'good work' they are supposed to be doing. A few arrests might prove beneficial."

The same issue also had this item: "Take your garden hoses inside nights. Harry Richardson failed to remember this and now he has no hose to take in."

Even the high winds and heavy rains of last week have had their counterpart in the past. The Vallejo Recorder of December 28, 1867, reported: "The Catholic Church in Suisun was blown down last night, loss \$1200. A large portion of the town is flooded. Two barns in Suisun Valley were unroofed. Allison's flour mill in Maine Prairie was flooded and flour damaged. The ravine through Vacaville has been out of its banks, carrying away fences, etc. The Causeway at Collinsville is damaged."

## **EARLY NAMES**

It may come as a surprise to many, but in the 1860's that area in the vicinity of Trinity, Butte, Kentucky and Ohio Streets was officially known as "North Beach." Some of the early residents there were John McAuliffe, Peter Rourke and a Mr. Foley.

The architect's drawing for the Ascension Episcopal Church, submitted on October 26, 1867, on the property at 638 Georgia Street, described it as being located in "Eastern Vallejo."

The Federal Housing Project built during World War 1, now called Bay Terrace, was officially built as "Georgetown," a tribute to the then Commandant of Mare Island, Captain Harry George USN.

Because of the objections of the postal authorities the name was changed to Bay Terrace. There is a Georgetown in the Sierra foothills, east of Auburn.

May we conclude with a note that shows perhaps we have changed. The Chronicle on Nov. 12, 1869, "Wanted, A boy about 16 years old and able to ride horseback, carry newspapers, and make himself generally useful."

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