

# Georgia St. Has Pioneers

By Ernest D. Wichels

Sunday, March 15, 1964

When the first block of Georgia Street was razed by the Redevelopment people for the Marina Vista project, the wreckers also removed the landmarks of many early business establishments. From the year 1850 the first block of Georgia has had associated with it the names of dozens of pioneer Vallejo merchants, lawyers, hotel operators, and others. In more recent years it has had some denizens of whom we shall say nothing.

But now that the one-hundred block is only rubble and memories, let us go back sixty-five years and review it. We are indebted to a member of a real pioneer family—Edwin Sanders of 519 Ohio Street—for help in this research. We'll start at Santa Clara, north side. John C. Molly occupied the corner with three establishments: Funeral Parlors, Livery Stable, and his saloon. Then followed the Washington Hotel, Fred Kiles Barber Shop, Sweeney's Saloon (they called him "Peg Leg" Sweeney), the Salvation Army, "Sergeant" Cosgrove's Saloon, Glasson's store and ice delivery; the Philadelphia House, and Gus Street's Saloon.

On the south side, beginning with Santa Clara, we have P. B. Lynch's Grocery Store (he was the late Superior Judge's father); the California Saloon; Mini's Creamery; Passalacqua's Vegetable Market; Glynn's Cigar Store; Fitzmaurice Butcher Shop; Ratto's Vegetables; Eagle Saloon and the Magnolia Restaurant.

## WHAT A BARBER SHOP DID

In 1898—the year of our story—barber' shops always had services you couldn't find today in any tonsorial parlor. They had bathing—facilities; for the bachelors who lived in rooming houses and worked in the shipyard. As a boy, Ed Sanders worked in Kiles Barber Shop. The shop had seven bath tubs, and they rented at 25 cents a bath, towel and soap included. It was Ed's job to keep the bathrooms tidied up. Kiles was a first-class shop; they charged 25 cents for a haircut, 15 cents for a shave. Cheaper shops on Virginia would do the two jobs for 30 cents.

Lynch sold milk for 10 cents a quart and bread for 5 cents a loaf. The saloons on this first block sold beer for 5 cents—with the free lunch. A wharf extended west from Georgia and Branciforte to the ferry slip. Here would come the fishing boats, and a 25 pound salmon would cost 50 cents. Today, it is nearer to one dollar a pound.

Some of the early advertisements are amusing today. In the Vallejo Chronicle of

February, 1868 M. Fitzpatrick, Painter and Paper Hanger, corner Virginia and Marin Streets, features "Walls Colored and Ceilings whitened."

## **ANOTHER ERA OF DECLINE**

Our neighbor, Cordelia, can also look back upon a past that is no more. In the Vallejo Recorder of Nov. 20, 1868, the editor writes: "Bridgeport (earlier name for Cordelia) is improving. In addition to the hotels and other business establishments, another store and a saloon are being erected and a restaurant has just been opened. Episcopal services are held at Trinity Chapel every Sabbath at 2 p.m." Well, the hotels and the stores and the restaurants are gone. There isn't a trace of the chapel. But you can still buy liquid refreshments.

The newspaper editors of these early days invariably added humor to their items. A century ago the question of women's suffrage was a political tempest. Vallejo had an active Suffrage Society. In reporting on one of their meetings, the editor wrote: "Grace Greenwood is in favor of giving the ballot to every woman who owns a sewing machine or a washtub." And then he added: "Why not extend it to all who own a cradle and have use for it?"

## **IN THE SECOND GRADE, YEAR 1873**

About a month ago we wrote of the early history of Vallejo's public schools. We told of the first graduating class of Vallejo High in 1873. Now we heard from a pupil of the old Lincoln School, same year, second grade, who remembers all of the details. This is the Vallejo pioneer, Mrs. Addie Winslow, who now resides at the Rex Mobile Estate, 1350 Pueblo Avenue, Napa. This wonderful lady is 97 years of age, and she has a kind word for her class room teachers who, too, are pioneers of our city. She mentions Miss Barry, Miss Kidder and Miss Benjamin. Wm. Crohurst was Lincoln's principal, and she tells how "sweet and understanding" the Misses Tobin and Winn were to her. Descendants of many of these teachers are still teaching in today's schools. She mentions an oddity which many of Vallejo's old-timers still recall: separate entrances to the schools for boys and for girls. Her High School work was under Professor Towle, and among Towle's star graduates she mentions Frank Devlin—one of Vallejo's most successful native sons. Addie Winslow's recollections could fill a book.

## **RAILROAD DREAMS**

We will give you bits of these dreams from time to time. The County has had many. For instance, from the Vallejo Chronicle of May 4, 1867: "Nathan Coombs, Sr., of Napa and J. B. Frisbie of Vallejo are officers of a company to build a railroad from Calistoga to Healdsburg. It will start when the present railroad from Vallejo to Calistoga is

completed.” On May 11, 1867, a Healdsburg correspondent to the Petaluma Journal said: “The people are disgorging the contents of their purses in a manner which means railroad will fail, and it will be no surprise if the cars cross Russian River within fifteen months while they are still wet with the fogs of Vallejo.”

We are still waiting for this surprise!

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/731>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/731/>