

How Early Editors Wrote

By Ernest D. Wichels

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One of the Gibson Publications—the Evening Chronicle, is nearing its 97th birthday. It was established as a weekly in the summer of 1867, just in time to give a running account of the progress of railroad construction proceeding from South Vallejo toward Marysville.

The first editor was able and respected Frank A. Leach. He was proud of his infant paper and predicted a bright future. Here is what he wrote in an editorial on November 9, 1868: "It has been nearly 18 months since first appeared the columns of the Vallejo Weekly Chronicle. Great changes have taken place since then and by no means the smallest is the enterprise of publishing a daily newspaper. As our business increases, as it surely will, we will enlarge our paper. It is true there is plenty of room for enlargement." His daily had four pages.

Leach observed far different rules than do present day city-desk editors, like Jack Dailey and Red Buehrer. Invariably the editor of the 1860s told the news story, and then expressed the editor's opinion of the item.

Let's look at a few of the stories of November 1868.

UNSEEMLY CONDUCT

Hoodlums prevailed then, as now. The issue of Nov. 11, 1868, reported: "Last night during the performance at Eureka Hall some parties acted in a manner not at all creditable nor pleasant to those in the audience or the actors. In the most pathetic parts of the play a coarse laugh would greet the ears, destroying the effect. This was kept up until Mr. Charles Lambert took the matter in hand and did what most of us would like doing. We venture there will be nothing of the kind tonight."

The next day the editor wrote: "A few nights since a person, very crazy or under the influence of liquor, entered the room of a married woman at the Vallejo House (Sacramento and Virginia, operated by a P. J. Lynch). For the purpose of defending herself she hurled a tumbler of water at him. It hit him in the face and made a ugly wound. The next morning he had the wound treated; not heeding the advice of the physician he traveled around in the sun and continued drinking and today he is crazy as a loon. Officer Edgar has him in charge. He is probably cured from entering female apartments without a special invite."

The same day there appeared this item: "The man who is in the habit of lodging in our office will receive fifty cents from us to procure him a bed, if he will only apply in person. No questions asked."

WATER PROBLEMS

On Nov. 19, 1868: "The rain last night has rendered our streets rather muddy and not quite in a condition for boating. What few street crossings that have been hastily constructed of planks, they are the source of infinite annoyance to pedestrians and also they furnish a great deal of amusement to lookers on, who enjoy the sport of seeing a fellow tumble down in the mud on Georgia Street and soil his apparel."

They worried about the quality of drinking water.

"It is almost useless to make any inquiry about our projected water works, as it will soon commence raining, and then we will not feel the want of good water. During six months at least, the majority of the citizens of Vallejo have to undergo the affliction of using water that is hard enough to try the temper of a saint in petticoats let alone dyspeptic old maids who growl at any and everything. We hope that another dry season will not go by with our wants in this respect unheeded."

The City Trustees passed an ordinance about dogs and the Chronicle editor wrote: "all dogs found running at large without tags are liable to the death penalty. This law will have the salutary effect of diminishing the number of canine species in our city, if the true valuation of the dogs is called into account." The city trustees placed the cost of tags at \$2.50 per dog.

The advertisements in the 1868 Chronicle are of interest since they, too, differ from today's style. In November 1868 the Union Hotel, 200-block of Georgia, operated by M. F. Moran, advertised: "High living at low figures—at the Union Hotel. Single meals, twenty-five cents; board and lodging \$5 a week. The poor and rich treated alike."

EARLY SCHOOLS

The early schools were privately operated. They advertised in the Chronicle, too, but we are indebted to "Early Days," authored by Mrs. Frank Bathe, for the story behind the ad of Prof. Mullins. Prof. William Patrick Mullins operated a school for boys. The three Rs of his day did not represent the "Rah, Rah, Rah" of the present school effervescence. School hours were from 9 to 4. There was no bell, the opening signal was the master coming to the front door and sticking out his hand. On -entering, everyone was lined up, hands up—inspection by the master with rule in hand. If there was any evidence of grime—crack with the ruler!—then out to the wash basin for

scrubbing, followed by another inspection. No barefoot boys were allowed—and shoes had to be polished. Prof. Mullins had a violent antipathy to marbles because they accumulated too much dirt on the hands, and alas for the pupil who had marbles in his possession. The Mullins School was uptown on Virginia Street. Another school of the 1868s which advertised in the Chronicle was that of Prof. W. H. Tripp—Specializing in Penmanship and Bookkeeping. His course in penmanship was known throughout the bay region and his students (who, in large number, were adults) came from a wide area.

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