

## Advertising Of Long Ago

By Ernest D. Wichels

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Present day shoppers for all sorts of merchandise are enticed by sales promotions and advertisements unheard of sixty or seventy years ago.

Today's "Dollar Days," "Moonlight Specials" and "Sidewalk Bargains" are matched by the full page newspaper advertisements of the supermarkets, the "warehouse clearances" of the furniture dealers, and the cajolery of the automobile dealer and the sub dividers. Since we are writing only about changes in newspaper advertising, we need not dwell on the development of TV commercials, the "throw-away" mail, or radio persuasion.

In making our comparison we must not forget that back in the 90's the newspapers did not have the facilities to rapidly make up an ad, and the edition seldom exceeded eight pages in all.

For today's example, we picked a copy of the Vallejo Chronicle at random, and will quote from the edition of May 13, 1895. Topley's Pharmacy on Georgia Street featured Sarsaparilla Tonic for a variety of ills. I. Dannebaum, at 323 Georgia, advertised another "remedy." He featured Dugan's Malt Whiskey, at 85c a bottle, "an effective remedy because it contains no fusel oil." Dannebaum's other special was Grandpa's Comfort Chewing Tobacco at 5c a piece.

In fact, most items were sold by "the piece," and there were other descriptions with which present day shoppers are not familiar. For example, butter was always sold by the "roll," never by the pound or cube. Geary Brothers, also on Georgia, advertised "family butter" at 15c a roll—a roll was about a pound, generous measure.

### PROFESSIONAL ADS

Professional ads were not as taboo in May 1895 as they are today. One of Vallejo's prominent dentists, Dr. F. E. Lovejoy, located in the Wilson House, Georgia and Sacramento Streets, had a "summer special" in the Chronicle: "Gold fillings, \$2; Silver or Amalgam, \$1; Cement, 75c; Gold Crowns, \$6 to \$7.50; Bridge work, \$6. Rubber Plates, \$7 to \$15; porcelain plates, \$75."

Another Georgia Street merchant, at No. 336, was the long-time hardware dealer, Mr. Winchell. His ad in the May 13th Chronicle featured only one item: "Buggy Whips." The

dairies of Vallejo, in the 90's, always had prominent newspaper space. The Three Mile Dairy, operated by D. Mini, offered "Fresh, rich milk daily. Good measure guaranteed. Families will be supplied with one cow's milk when desired." The Flosden Dairy likewise advertised "Customers will be supplied with one cow's milk when desired." There's certainly been a change in this procedure of marketing milk!

There is one big difference in the advertisement between May 1895 with respect to adjectives and prices. Today eggs are invariably described as "country fresh" and vegetables as "garden fresh," and there is hardly a product which doesn't have one or two superlative (and may I add "superfluous" ) adjectives. In the earlier days an egg was an egg; a suit of clothes simply that; etc. And there were few, if any, prices listed at 49c, 99c, or \$4.99. In fact, some of the ads actually used the phrases "two-bits," "four-bits," etc.

## **HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS**

Vallejo had about ten hotels in the 90's. Since Wall—of them had dining rooms, their ads included such lines as "the table is always supplied with the best the Market affords" (Philadelphia House), "the table will always be supplied with all the delicacies of the season" (Metropolitan Hotel).

One of the puzzling items about our 1895 Chronicle is the way in which all restaurants featured oysters in the ads—refrigeration in those days consisted of chunk ice in an insulated box. No less than four of Vallejo's eating places used the word "oyster" in the name. These included Angelo's Olympia Restaurant and Oyster House at Georgia and Branciforte; Bellmer and Nicon's Delmonico's Restaurant and Oyster House at Sacramento and Georgia. The Olympia House featured "21 meal tickets for \$4," and Delmonico's added "ball players always come here after hard training."

The grocery stores usually used the words "family produce" and "housekeeping goods" in their ads.

The early newspapers carried classified ads just as today's press does. The real estate agent (they hadn't yet invented the word realtor) usually used the classified section, and frequently boasted of their sales as well as offering property for sale or rental. In the edition of the Chronicle we're discussing, Lou Harrier reports having sold the house at Louisiana and Eldorado Street for \$900. I wonder if this particular home is still there—certainly the price has changed.

Many of these classified items were humorous. Here's one: "FOUND: A flat bottom boat 14 feet long, painted blue. Owner can have the same by paying for this ad and the trouble of finding the boat."

There was a large ad by the White Sulphur Springs (now the Blue Rock Springs), which spoke of family camping and picnics; a bar, billiard and sitting room; arrangements for dinner and supper parties; and a large dance floor. There'll be more on this later.

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