

## Ranch Towns In Two Areas

By Ernest D. Wichels

Sunday, October 18, 1964

Most people think of Vallejo strictly a shipyard city. Many find it difficult to believe that once it qualified as a "ranch town." Ranchowners, the hundreds of employes in dairy operations, cattle and sheep raising, and grain and hay harvests, formed a vital segment of Vallejo's economy in early days.

Spread of subdivisions and the division of large holdings into smaller parcels has stricken Vallejo from the list of ranch towns. Dixon and Rio Vista are probably the only two Solano communities which still serve large ranching units; to a lesser degree Vacaville and Fairfield do so. Once ranch-dependent towns of Elmira, Batavia, Maine Prairie, Tremont, Denverton and others have all but disappeared.

We talked with representatives of two families this past week. One, Dan Foley of 127 North Camino Alta; whose father crossed the Isthmus of Panama in 1875 and came to this country. Another, Mrs. A. R. (Christine) Luchsinger, whose late husband was a descendant of another pioneer ranch family.

Mrs. Luchsinger showed me a document signed by President Andrew R. Johnson on March 5, 1865, which "for monies received" approved the "right of pre-emption to certain purchasers on the Soscol Ranch" of General Vallejo's. The document lists Peter Wild, I. C. Rounds, David Reese, Berry Shouse, E. H. Rowe and George Rounds. Peter Wild's ranch was located on the American Canyon Road, and the access to the new Canyon overpass runs through the property. His daughter Elizabeth married J. J. Luchsinger and the "Luchsinger Ranch" has been a local by-word for 80 years. Actually, following the rains and floods of 1889-90, Luchsinger moved his family to Vallejo and later became state senator from Solano County. A granddaughter, Mrs. H. N. Hunt, resides at 915 Carolina St.

### THE FOLEY RANCHES

Dan's father, John Foley, first ran the Borges Ranch in American Canyon. Then, in 1890, he leased the Luchsinger Ranch mentioned above. Three years later, the Foleys moved to what was then the Hussey Ranch a half-mile west of Blue Rock Springs on Columbus Parkway. He also leased, for a time, the Ski Valley Ranch—just north of Lake Herman. Dan's brother, Jack, resides at 1909 Napa St.; two other brothers are deceased; a sister, Deborah, lives in San Francisco.

Dan and his brothers for many years operated Vallejo's widely known Maid of California Creamery; Dan was chairman of the County Board of Supervisors, and president of the Mechanics and Merchants National Bank at Marin and Virginia streets. Dan is responsible for much of the information I am able to give to our readers today.

Hunters Hill bears the name of another pioneer ranch family; the Hunters had three ranches. Their holdings began just east of the Solano County Fairgrounds, to the top of the hill, and ran southerly to include the extreme eastern part of Vallejo as far as Trailer City on Springs Road.

The Swett family today operates the early Tobin Ranch—one of the largest in the area—back of the old quicksilver mines. Adjoining the Swett property is the J. Hayden Perkins Ranch of today; 80 and more years ago it was run by Felix Fleur. The Azevedo dairy ranch is one of Central California's best; this plant out on Lake Herman Road was the original Clyde Drake Ranch.

Flemingtowne Subdivision was once part of the John Fleming Ranch. Son Dave was elected county supervisor in 1896; later, Dave and son-in-law Powers operated a grocery in town, and this family has closely woven ties throughout Vallejo. Another well-known name, Hanns, identified the ranchholdings just east of U.S. 40, north of Tennessee street; this originally was the Joe Phillips Ranch.

Nearby is the Winslow Ranch—the home still stands at 30 Winslow Ave. Mrs. Addle Winslow, 97 years young, lives at 1350 Pueblo, Napa. Out Broadway was the Baxter Knight Ranch—scene of thorough-bred horse raising. Further out, near the automobile race track, is the Walsh Ranch—another prominent name in Vallejo's city life.

## **THE MINI FAMILY**

We can't talk about ranches unless the long career of the Mini family is recalled. Two brothers, Lorenzo and Dana, came to this area from Switzerland long ago. This family has been prominent in dairying operations, and identified in Vallejo's economic and civic life.

Toward Benicia there were other holdings. There was an interruption here, for awhile, when a real estate combine in the 1860's attempted to "corral" the land and make a "mint of money" selling it to Stanford et al of the Central Pacific for railroad purposes. But this failed, and ranching resumed. One was the Point Farm, operated by Bob Gore, Jack McGrane and later by Dos Reis; and now much of it is represented in the Benicia Road subdivisions.

The Corcorans—and we salute also the many local descendants of this pioneer

family—operated a ranch in the neighborhood of Southhampton Bay eastward over the ridges. They established one of Vallejo's first slaughterhouses, and operated a large meat market on Georgia Street some 70-odd years ago.

The Rudolph Miller Ranch (Mrs. Miller was a Weniger girl) gave its name to Miller Road, more recently changed to Columbus Parkway, from the Springs Road intersection south toward the Corcoran property on Southhampton Bay.

Obviously we have omitted dozens of other ranches and the names of early and influential pioneer families. We could likewise tell you of the part some of these played in the social life—"barn dances," etc. But this column does have space limitations.

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