A Bit Of This And That

By Ernest D. Wichels

Sunday, November 15, 1964

It rained this past week—considerably above November’s 91-year average of about 1.80 inches. But earlier Vallejoans saw much more moisture than we’ve had. November of 1885 had 6.6 inches; November of 1926 a total of 6.2 inches. And 1875, 1892, 1913 and 1934 recorded 5-inch rainfalls in November.

The stormiest winter of Vallejo’s history (1889-90), which posted a 34-inch seasonal total, made the Vallejo Chronicle’s pages almost every day. The Chronicle of Nov. 18, 1889: “Yesterday’s storm alone resulted in Lake Chabot being half filled.” On Dec. 6, 1889: “The railroad runs through a lake from Soscol to the City of Napa.” Dec. 20th: “Slides have stopped SP train service between Crockett and Oakland.”

REPORTING STYLE

In previous columns we have noted the difference in reporting news over the past century. Here are a few more examples.

In the Chronicle of July 20, 1871: “John C—and David H—were arrested yesterday for being drunk and disturbing the peace, and when taken before Justice Munn they begged so hard to be let off that the judge’s heart melted and he said ‘Go, and sin no more—but git out of town in five minutes.’ They gitted!”

And in the Chronicle of March 5, 1875: “New Cemetery. The representatives of the Vallejo lodges of Knights of Pythias, Red Men, the Pioneers, and the Orphans Home today concluded the purchase of a tract of land from Mr. Ira Austin for a cemetery. This tract lies parallel with the southern side of the Masonic and Odd Fellows Cemetery (now Sunrise), and embraces about 3 acres.”

The next day the Chronicle announced a second cemetery on Benicia Road, later known as Carquinez, next to the Catholic Cemetery, and added: “New cemeteries are all the rage in Vallejo. We hope that the Vallejo secret societies will soon turn their attention to some more cheerful subject than grave yards.”

Also, on March 6, 1875, the same newspaper made reference to a subject which some of our readers may believe is of recent development. Here is an item with the dateline “Wilmington, N.C., March 4, 1875. A civil rights person hauled up a saloon keeper for refusing to sell him a drink. The U. S. Commissioner held that the civil rights bill
(passed by the Congress early in 1875) doesn't apply to saloons.

The Vallejo Recorder, a daily which ceased business in 1875 and sold its equipment to the Vallejo Chronicle, had an editor who likewise wrote in the fashion of that day. On August 8, 1871, the reporter said: “Dr. A—, formerly apothecary at the Mare Island Naval Hospital, has been the recipient at our hands of some unsavory abuse in the columns of the Recorder. Some of it was probably well deserved and some was not. We are glad to hear that he has begun happily, living with his wife in Brooklyn, in New York.” We checked some previous issues, then decided it was better to let the above item speak for itself.

**MORE ABOUT SWIFT**

Two weeks ago we wrote a lengthy report on one of Solano County’s early pioneers—Granville P. Swift of Green Valley. We told of his coming across the plains, deserts and mountains to Oregon in 1844 with the Kelsey party; of his mining activities and accumulation of a fortune; his farm in Sonoma County, then to the Washoe (Nev.) mines, and then to a ranch in Green Valley where he occupied the present building of the Country Club in the middle ‘60’s. He met death in Berryessa Valley in 1875 while returning from a quicksilver mine, and is buried in the Rockville Cemetery. Swift’s sister is the grandmother of F. Sidney Jones IV of Green Valley. But what we didn’t know then and want to say now is to report the very prominent part Granville P. Swift played in the Bear Flag incident.

Early in June 1846 he was a member of a small party of Americans (including Dr. Robert Semple, cofounder of Benicia) which engaged in a minor military action against the Mexican-Californians. A few days preceding June 14, 1946, a party which included William B. Ide, H. L. Ford, E. Merrit4, Semple and Swift, traveled from the Sacramento Valley, through Lake, Napa and Sonoma counties, and on Sunday morning the 14th, surprised the garrison in Sonoma, took General Vallejo and his brother Salvador as prisoners, and established the abortive California Republic. On that Sunday the Bear Flag was made, and then hoisted on the flag pole in the Sonoma Plaza.

The flag raising party included: Ide, as commander; Ford and Sam Kelsey as lieutenants, and Swift as 1st sergeant. Later, on July 5, 1846, when Fremont assumed personal jurisdiction in Sonoma, Swift commanded Co. C under Fremont. In 1851 he was county treasurer of Colusa County, which office he resigned on Dec. 1, 1851 and his place was taken by Ide. Another prominent early pioneer of Napa and Solano history is John Grigsby, and he likewise was a member of the Bear Flag incident, and later commanded Co. E of the California Battalion under Fremont.

**TRADE AT HOME?**
“Business, though by no means in poor condition, could be greatly improved if our people would work together. Many persons who are in need of an article think it necessary to go to S. F. for it when the same thing could be had as cheap or cheaper here and of as good quality. All towns situated near large cities suffer more or less from this cause. No city, however `lively’ could remain rich if it was subjected to a continual and unnecessary drain.” No, friends, this is not from a current Chamber of Commerce brochure. It appeared in the Vallejo Chronicle nearly 90 years ago—on March 10, 1875, copied from the San Jose Patriot of the same week. People change, but the ideas do not.