

The Turkey Is Unchanged

By Ernest D. Wichels

Sunday, November 22, 1964

Thanksgiving has always meant turkey (even though cooked on a wood stove) , but the day has changed in many other ways. Up to 50 years ago this city and county invariably celebrated Thanksgiving Eve with a Masquerade Ball.

The Chronicle of Nov. 26, 1903—61 years ago: “Vallejo Parlor of the Native Sons will celebrate with a Thanksgiving Masque at the Pavilion (Georgia and Sutter) tonight. The committee (which reads like a local Who’s Who of that era) is: G. F. Harris, F. H. Lee, T. J. O’Hara, H. T. Stevens, S. J. McKnight, Thomas Vice, F. W. Gorham, George Weniger, R. H. Finnell, H. J. Widenmann, W. J. Tormey, R. E. Doyle, John Noonan, Joseph Clavo and A. S. Halliday.”

And 70 years ago this week, in the Chronicle of Nov. 8, 1894: “The Thanksgiving Carnival at Armory Hall tonight is the general talk of the town. Only those residents of Napa and Solano counties will compete for prizes. Heretofore maskers from San Francisco, coming here with costumes to rent, have taken away the best prizes for the reason they had first choice.”

This committee included F. H. Houseman, C. C. Greenwood, Fred and C. H. DeBolt, R. L. Cassady and Ray Benjamin (later district attorney of Napa County, National Exalted Ruler of the Elks and National Treasurer of the Republican Party).

There was competition, too. Fifty years ago this week, Nov. 25, 1914, the Chronicle reports: “Miss Kathryn DeCelle, well known and successful dancing teacher, will give a barn dance in San Pablo Hall, with music by the Hay-Costello orchestra.” Kathryn was of a pioneer Vallejo family; she passed away a few years ago, and only last Monday we heard of the death of her husband, Commodore C. M. Yates, USN, of Coronado.

OTHER THANKSGIVING EVENTS

An annual feature a half century ago was the Thanksgiving Sale, and most downtown stores participated. In the week preceding Thanksgiving, 1905, Levee’s advertisement in the Chronicle read: “All \$12.50 and \$15 men’s suits offered to you at \$8.35. Our complete line of overcoats reduced to \$11.65. Hurry, there’s plenty of cold weather ahead. These specials for spot cash only.”

Another early feature were the Turkey Shoots on the Sunday preceding the holiday.

Various fire companies, athletic societies, etc., held them. Today's generation probably never heard of a Turkey Shoot.

The tradition in those days was for the churches to hold a social on Thanksgiving night, after the turkey dinner. For nearly a score of years the Y.P.S.C.E. of the Presbyterian Church held theirs at Eureka Hall (Sacramento and York). In 1894 the entertainers included Miss Blanch Harvey (now Mrs. Hanson), Mamie and Lulu Luchsinger, Marie Buss and Lily Wickstrom.

THANKSGIVING SPORTS

Prior to WW-II this holiday was always an athletic day. Vallejo featured football and, prior to 1915, there always were boat races between the ships at Mare Island and the Vallejo Yachting and Rowing Club. The race on Nov. 23, 1903, between the USS Independence and the Club was won by the Navy, and the Chronicle reports that "both gigs were owned by George F. Hilton of Vallejo."

Thanksgiving Eve in 1914 featured an Athletic Carnival, highlighted by a basketball game between Vallejo High and Rio Vista. Vallejo won, 27 to 17, with a team composed of Luchsinger, center; Mini and Russell, forwards; Burns, Ames and Heegler, guards. The players and scores of rooters then retired to the school for a dance, followed by a banquet "prepared by the local scholars."

How many local Hogan and Vallejo High students know that rugby was once their top game? On Thanksgiving Day 1914 the Red and White rugby team was scheduled to play Antioch High. The Chronicle wrote: "Coon Mini will be a big factor for the locals; he has a wonderful toe." In fact, two other Minis were on this rugby team—Rome and Severus, plus McGrane, Ames, Heegler, Owens, Kielberg, McGee, Russell and two Luchsingers.

But what a disappointment! Hundreds of fans made their way to the Cycrodome and waited until nearly four o'clock when the announcement was made that the Vallejo High faculty refused to allow the contest to take place, owing to the fact that the Antioch team had several players in their lineup who were not scholars of that school. The Vallejo boys were more than willing to meet the visitors, "ringers or no ringers," but Prof. Nielsen ruled otherwise.

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Chronicle of Nov. 27, 1914, reports still another happy Thanksgiving Day story: "Miss Edith Mangold, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Mangold of this city and prominent in the social work of the Presbyterian Church, was married to Edward W. Price, wireless operator of the tug Iroquois. The ceremony was read at the home of the bride

by the Rev. D. A. Mobley in the presence of a large number of relatives.”

Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Price. The Prices reside at 1020 Kentucky St.; they were married, 50 years ago this Thanksgiving, in the house next door, 1022 Kentucky St.—the home in which Mrs. Price was born. But the circumstances attending this wedding are interesting—it almost didn’t occur as scheduled. Two days prior to Thanksgiving the tug Iroquois left Mare Island with a load of lumber for the radio station on Farallon Islands.

That evening Radio Electrician Price received a message aboard the Iroquois that the steam lumber schooner Hanalie was on the rocks at Duxbury Reef, and the tug proceeded on a mercy trip. Only wreckage, and one body, were found and the tug returned with the body to a San Francisco dock. At this point Ed Price “jumped” ship instead of proceeding to the Farallons, to keep his appointment with a prospective bride. Skipper Bruce had a “Thanksgiving” heart—so all went well!

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/764>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/764/>