

Solano's 49ers

By Ernest D. Wichels

Sunday, May 02, 1965

It isn't easy to find a real "native son" these days. In fact, "native sons" are California's minority group in this day of expanding population - with 20,000 new residents crossing our state boundaries every month. Yet, it is surprising how many of our Vallejo and Solano County residents are direct descendants of the hardy pioneers who came to California - by overland trail or via the Isthmus of Panama, in 1849 or earlier.

On May 23, 1869 - 96 years ago, there was organized here the Vallejo Society of California Pioneers. General John B. Frisbie, son-in-law of General Vallejo, was the first president.

Its by-laws listed many objectives, including "the collection of information connected with the early settlement and subsequent history of Solano County, and to form such libraries and cabinets and pursue such literary and scientific objects as from time to time may be determined, and to advance the interests and perpetuate the memory of those whose sagacity, energy and enterprise induced them to settle in the wilderness and become founders of a new state."

OUR FOUNDERS

Rodney Rulofson of Suisun Valley possesses one of the few composite photographs made of some of the members of the Vallejo Society of California Pioneers, prepared by Vallejo's photographer J. G. Smith some 80 years ago.

It fails to include a score or more of its charter members - persons who undoubtedly passed on before photographs were taken.

The charter included the names of Messrs. Ayers, Bergwall, Buckland, Clayton, Edwards, Frisbie brothers, Gunderson, Guffy, Griffin, Gordon, Garrison, Hopkins, Hamill, Hutchinson, Halsey, Hobbs, Hubbs brothers, King, Hendrickson, Lee, Hudson, Hauff, Hall, Jones, Keating, Laughran, Lay, Munn, Mitchell, and Murphy.

Also stich well-known county names as Mann, McKenna, Marion, McLeod, Narvaez, O'Donnel, Osborn, Powell, Poor, Palmer, Rose, Rawson, Roache, Reynolds, Ross, Ricker, Regan, Spencer, Stege, Southard, Spruce, Shute, Seavy, Vanfine, Woodall, Watson, Welsh, Williams and Ward.

FIRST MEETING

General Vallejo was made an honorary member at the society's first meeting on May 27, 1869, and other members were admitted. They included Messrs, Hall, Walker, Chever, Morrison, Barbour, Brooks, French, Morrison, Sanders.

Today the traditions are carried on by the state-wide "Society of California Pioneers," with headquarters in San Francisco. Qualification for membership requires a person to be a direct male-descendant of one who arrived in California in 1849 or earlier.

Our own General Vallejo is "member No. 1" in that society. The California Society prints a quarterly historical pamphlet which is widely recognized as an authority on early places and events.

OTHER 1869 ORGANIZATIONS

In these early days we didn't have any county "building and loan associations," "land title insurance or abstract companies," or even knew the term "realtor." But Vallejo did have three Homestead Associations - who would furnish you with a lot, build a home if you wished, and finance it, too.

On Jan. 27, 1869 there was organized the Union Homestead Association, with a capital of \$82,320. It purchased 210 acres known as the Hannibal Ranch. On the elevated knoll of this ranch, the Chronicle reports: "is the magnificent building of the Good Templars Orphans' Home." This is in the area occupied by Vista de Vallejo homes such as the Phil Bergwalls, the Dr. Gibbons, Clarence Knotts, etc. The schoolhouse of the Orphans' Home was the caddy house for the municipal golf course until about 1939.

The homesite ad officers were Simonton, Wood, Kidder and Wilson. On Jan. 29, 1869 the East Vallejo Railroad Homestead Association was incorporated with a capital of \$40,000. They had 100 acres. On June 24, 1869 the Vallejo City Extension Homestead Association came into being.

GRANDIOSE ADS

They boasted of their properties. The City Extension Association said in the Chronicle: "Our land is situated on the most beautiful spot to be found in all the suburbs of Vallejo; only one mile from the business centre of Vallejo, and bids fair to become, at no distant day, the favorite selection of the many merchants employed in our city, for their homes and residences." And where was this beautiful spot? Generally speaking, it was between Florida and Ohio, and from El Dorado to Amador, and straddled the railroad

tracks.

These Associations took the place of a savings bank - something Vallejo did not have in 1869, which the Chronicle urged "as a place where amounts, no matter how small, could be deposited, and which would otherwise too often be squandered."

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/773>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/773/>