

Fun Time At The Springs

By Ernest D. Wichels

Sunday, May 23, 1965

Last Sept. 13 we wrote of the past glory of Blue Rock Springs-how it was established about 1866, taken over by General Frisbie in 1869, the center of Vallejo's summer life-dancing, swimming, camping-for half a century.

Known as the White Sulphur Springs until World War 3, it boasted of a two-story hotel, a dining room capable of seating 150 diners, a bachelors' building with numerous rooms upstairs, and game rooms on the first floor.

Also, three commodious cottages, a 45-foot-square outdoor dance floor, stables to accommodate 20 horses, bowling alley and shooting gallery, and the "old swimming hole." Also, a rose garden which Colonel Jackson-operator of the competitive Napa Soda Springs-said was "second only to his magnificent garden."

The late Manuel Madrid and family operated the hotel and facilities from about 1902 to about 1926. Since then most of the original buildings have disappeared, but under the jurisdiction of the Vallejo Recreation District a new playground and summer camp conveniences are being installed.

FIRST HOTEL DIRECTORY

This past week the Solano County Historical Society was presented with the first hotel registers of the White Sulphur Springs Hotel-from Thursday, May 1, 1902 through 1912.

The generous gift was made by Mr. Ralph Ryan, 2600 Rochon Way, Sacramento, on behalf of his mother, Mrs. Carmelita Madrid Ryan-whose girlhood days were spent so joyfully at The Springs.

Actually, credit is indirectly due the Parks and Sessler Realtors, 2408 Sonoma Blvd., who found and recognized the value of these directories when renting one of the Ryan properties.

Such discoveries and presentations are constantly occurring, and the society hopes to find the means of making them available to Solano County residents on a daily basis.

STORIES UNTOLD

The Springs' Directories could tell many stories. We can only guess as we look at some of the entries.

First, the patrons came from everywhere! For example, the persons who registered on June 16, 1902, listed addresses as: New York, Anaconda, San Francisco, Mexico City, Reno and Kau, Hawaii. The guests on June 13, 1903 included addresses as Boston, Kalamazoo, Yreka, Pensacola, Chicago and Jackson, Cal.

The campers had to register, too. During 1902, 1903 and 1904 we find: William Gee and family; the S. M. Levees, Merritt Winchells, Thomas B. Dicks, Gedges, Prachts, Will Greens and O. S. Coopers.

But the younger folk must have had their social hours. On July 16, 1903, Misses Elsa Widenmann, Inez Farmer, Hilma Lundberg and a Miss Roddy were registered. On June 16, 1902 we find the gay blades: Chas. E. Walsh, Geo. A. Brew, Jas. O'Leary, Frank Haggerty, John McGill and D. E. Balfour.

Of course, the grouping may mean nothing, but it is significant and perhaps "a good time was had by all." We find on July 23, 1913: Lou Lundberg, R. H. Leary, Jimmy Glynn, Leo and John Healy, Robt. Farrell, Tom Banne, Frank Smith, Jack Madigan and Albert Boss.

OTHER PIONEER NOTES

The early Vallejo Chronicle editors used naive wording in their stories.

The Chronicle of Feb. 5, 1872 ran this story. "Goats. These amiable creatures paid the garden of the residence of Mr. Sawyer on Georgia Street a visit last Saturday. Mr. Sawyer is intending to get a lot of new trees and shrubbery soon."

The following day, Feb. 6, the editor had a logical follow-up. "Slaughter of the Innocents. The citizens of Vallejo are taking the abolishment of the 'goat nuisance' into their own hands. One of these animals was found shot on Virginia St. this morning."

And on May 28, 1880, the editor wrote: "VANDALISM. Some miscreant got into the Chronicle office last night and amused himself by breaking a press and scattering things around generally. A charge of buckshot in his left lung would have been in order had our shooting man been at his post."

Oh, yes! we had vandals in those days, too.

INTERNAL MEDICINE

Today's doctors of internal medicine-like Drs. Garthe, Kubota, Coffield, Villanueva, Lawson and others-must find it difficult to match the countless drugs and equally countless symptoms of modern times.

It was much simpler in Vallejo a century ago. The Vallejo Chronicle of Aug.-Sept.-Oct., 1872 had this advertisement:

"Dr. Furber's Cordial of Mountain Balm and Oregon Grape, two plants, abounding on the base of, and on the mountains surrounding Mount Shasta, Calif. "A Restorer of GOOD BLOOD and acting equally and surely, and as well on the LUNGS as on the STOMACH, is superior to other COUGH MEDICINES, by bringing both to bear with the stimulated action of the WHOLE SKIN in throwing off Disease of either."

It could be purchased from John W. Truitt, Vacaville Station (now Elmira); James Topley's Pioneer Drug Store, 166 Georgia St., and James Frost Apothecary Store at 173 Georgia St.

It was probably very low-priced, too, but the advertisement doesn't say.

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