

"THE WAY IT WAS"

Mrs. J.W. Pugh, Chairman

Foreword...

This is a country made up of all sorts of different people, drawn from every nation in the world by the thoughts of hope and freedom. It is the United States of America. Its people are loyal to one flag, the Stars and Stripes, and to one cause - democracy. It does not pretend to be a perfect state, but it is the best to come along so far.

How did it all get started?

Columbus - whether he was the first to discover America is still being debated - launched an era of exploration.

Ponce de Leon discovered Florida in 1502.

Cabrillo, looking for the Northwest Passage, came a half-century after Columbus. Fogs disclosed only unyielding mountains. Not for any who followed in that time - Drake, Portola, Cermeno and Vizcaino - did the fogs lift to reveal the entrance to the great bay, the Golden Gate.

Amazingly, 190 years slipped by with practically nothing happening on the West Coast. But elsewhere on the continent, things were astir:

Santa Fe, New Mexico, founded

Jamestown settled

Pilgrims land at Plymouth

Pennsylvania chartered by Charles II

England and France declare war

Stamp Act imposed by Parliament

Colonists resolve not to buy goods

Stamp Act repealed - Drum beats started rolling...

On the West Coast:

Russian fur traders' built posts in Alaska, and then in 1812 found the sea otters in California had desirable fur and set up a trading post called Fort Ross on the Sonoma Coast near the Russian River.

A worried Spain decided to occupy Alta California and protect the northern frontier.

Portola stumbled on the southeast arm of San Francisco Bay in 1769

but was not impressed. So Spain ignored her northern province for four years. Then in 1773, occupation of Alta California began in earnest. The Spaniards established four presidios - San Diego, Santa Barbara, Monterey and San Francisco; three pueblos - San Jose, Los Angeles, and Branciforte, near Santa Cruz and a chain of twenty-one missions that extended from the first one at San Diego to the last one at Sonoma. Mission Bells were ringing on the West Coast. The Liberty Bell would soon be ringing on the East Coast. In the East - Drum beats were rolling louder...

Events moved quickly to overthrow the British rule

Tea dumped in Boston Harbor 1773

Battle of Lexington opened Revolution, April 19, 1775

Washington took command of army

Second Continental Congress moved on June 17, 1776,

"that the United States are and of right ought to be free and independent states"

Motion adopted, and on July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence announced the birth of a new nation. The drum beats were furiously loud!

And now the country grew by leaps and bounds. The 13 States spread and overflowed. New states were added. Immigrants came from many countries to better themselves.

In 51 years, America went from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, settled the Middle West, explored and settled mountains as high as the Alps, crossed rivers and staggered for days over plains of alkali and desert lands and brought to them the Stars and Stripes and the drawling American lingo.

Came the Industrial Revolution and the Civil War. And then the problem of rebuilding the Nation.

Back on the West Coast:

Rancho Days had arrived. They dated from 1784, when the Spanish Governor made the first grants to Spanish Army veterans. But the rancho movement really flourished in the 1830's under Mexican rule. Pastoral life was simple. Cattle raising was the chief occupation, not for meat, but for tallow and hide, and the hide became the California dollar. Life was filled with rodeos, weddings, bullfights, fandangos and horse races. Shortly after 1800, the Spanish began to explore the central valley. Moraga worked his way up the valley from Mission San Jose and encountered the American River and explored it upstream to Auburn. So he must have passed quite close to Fair Oaks. He counted eleven Indian villages along the way. Next, the Yankees came:

William Richardson, an Englishman, who was active in the village

known as Yerba Buena, later known as San Francisco.

A Scot who called himself and his estate - Gilroy.

Dr. John Marsh, a Yankee, who settled near Mount Diablo.

John Augustus Sutter, a controversial Swiss figure, who dreamed of empire and built a Fort where the Sacramento and American Rivers joined. He welcomed the first Americans as out of the desert they appeared - mountain men, troopers and traders in fur - Americans!

In 1826, the first American known to have explored this region of California was Jedediah Smith, one of the most picturesque of the mountain men. He and his men reached the American River, explored it as far as an area around Folsom, calling it the Wild River. By 1830, trappers were working this area in large numbers and the name Rio de Los Americanos, or American River was in common use.

Smith recorded in his diary that this was a land "where the creator has scattered a more than ordinary share of his bounties." The valleys and foothills were profuse with wildflowers. The oaks were magnificent in size. Wild oats grew from four to seven feet high and the clover was so thick, a man could not walk through it. Vegetation along the American River was thick and intertwined like a jungle. Grape and blackberry grew among the oaks, cottonwoods and willows - also, some manzanita, toyon and digger pine.

Grizzly bears roamed the valley, also elk, deer and antelope. And there were wolves, foxes, rabbits, squirrels and raccoons. In the streams were found beaver and otter. There was also an incredible number of birds present. And the river teemed with fish.

The native Indians, the Maidu, found a natural feasting table here. They were settled in many villages and several burial sites have been recorded.

On the National Scene:

Two events in the last third of the 19th century were of utmost importance in our history. One was the opening of direct coast to coast service on the first transcontinental railway in 1870 when the Central and Union Pacific lines were joined at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869.

The other event was purely sentimental - the celebration in 1876 of the hundredth anniversary of the nation's founding. The main event, the Centennial Exhibition, was appropriately staged in Philadelphia, the scene of the signing of the Declaration 100 years before. The New York Herald proclaimed "the last hundred years have been the most fruitful and the most glorious period of equal length in the history of the human race."

What were we like at this time in our history? We were a sentimental, ultra-respectable people in this Victorian era.

We were a nation on the move as the frontiersmen's hunger for land spurred us on.

In the long peace after the Civil War, wealth multiplied. There were many new millionaires and extravagances everywhere.

Houses were very ornate. Their interiors were stuffed with settees, divans, ornate tables and armchairs and, of course, a piano - fans, plants, umbrellas, plaster busts, lamps, cushions, coat racks and china cabinets.

The Victorian woman strived for elegance with tortured hair and dresses of silks and satins, taking up to 20 yards of material. Bustles reigned in 1876 but bicycles and the athletic Gibson Girl banished them.

For men - beards and mustaches bloomed everywhere.

The small boy saw himself as Tom Sawyer but mam preferred a Little Lord Fauntleroy.

Little girls were the personification of sugar and spice, married young, and managed households for the rest of their lives.

It was an era of cure-alls - most with a kick! Sarsaparilla, stomach bitters, Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, catarrh remedies, ginger tonic, Carter's Little Nerve Pills.

The city grew up - smoke and filth came. Skyscrapers, 20 stories high; giant bridges reached across rivers. Builders made great strides; the department store, the chain store, and the shopping centers such as Marshall Field's and Woolworth's were introduced. Getting around was a problem. Carriage and horse trams choked the streets. The cable car in 1873, San Francisco, became a success and lines opened in other cities. The apartment house came into being.

Between 1870 and 1900 came a quest for fun.

Baseball clubs sprang up. The circus was popular. Dime shows, Variety shows, minstrel shows, burlesque, amateur nights, melodramas, the legitimate theatre, and that show of shows - Buffalo Bill's Wild West were popular.

Other popular shows were Uncle Tom's Cabin, Count of Monte Cristo, Sherlock Holmes, and the Floradora Sextet.

People were reading Owen Wister's "The Virginian" and Kipling's Poems.

Victor Herbert was a popular composer, and people were singing "Sweet Rosie O'Grady."

The period ended with over 45 million people still on farms, the motto "God Bless Our Home" on the wall, and the ballad "Home, Sweet Home"

bringing moist eyes to our singers.

Meanwhile, the California Territory was ceded to the United States in 1848 at the conclusion of the Mexican War. After meeting in Monterey and for a brief period in San Jose, Vallejo, and Benicia, the Legislature moved to Sacramento which was established as the State Capitol in 1854.

Between 1844, when Joel Dedmond was granted the right to Rancho San Juan and the 1860's, when the Sacramento area was becoming a rapidly developing portion of the United States, participants of some of the major events in our state traveled along the old Coloma road just across the Fair Oaks bluffs overlooking the American River. James Marshall rode along this road with news that gold had been discovered in the tail race at Sutter's Mill in Coloma, an event of such magnitude that it created an instant civilization out of the length and breadth of California.

Miners swarmed toward the foothills from Sacramento, many of them using Coloma Road. Some of them must have traveled along the north bank, too, because an old journal reported an orchard where cherries might be purchased. As described, the orchard must have been located in the bottomland at the end of Bannister Road where the Waldorf School is now located. By the summer of 1859 there were more than 80 inns along the road from Sacramento to Coloma and Placerville. Sacramento was thriving. The first stage-coach operation in the state sprang up. Wells Fargo was established. The Sacramento Railroad was built, the first in the state. The Pony Express began operation in 1860. Streetcars, the railroad, depots, piers, and docks made up the scene. And then in 1869, the great event: Sacramento was linked with the East by rail.

Folsom was growing by leaps and bounds, as one of the first train depots in the West.

The second largest vineyard in the world owned by the Natoma Company stretched from the American River to Lodi, a beautiful sight to see from the American River bluffs.

The Citrus Heights-Orangevale areas had come to the attention of developers in the 1880's. They wanted to emulate the success of the "citrus colonies in Southern California. Thus came into being the Orange Vale and Cardwell Colonies. Settlers could buy a ten acre farm for \$1,250.00 and have it cleared and planted for \$250.00.

In the early 90's, a man, a representative of a Chicago firm, the Howard and Wilson Publishing Co., which was seeking land for a colony, rode up a trail along the American River and was greatly impressed with the beauty of the land, especially a large stand of moss-draped oaks along the north bank of the River. He had found his site. It took the name of the

"Sunset Colony" and was later named Fair Oaks because it looked like Fair Oaks, Virginia.

The first of the excursion trains to Fair Oaks arrived in Sacramento in November, 1895. The prospective immigrants took the train to Folsom where they visited the State Prison and toured the newly built hydroelectric plant which was supplying electricity to Sacramento, 22 miles away. Then they boarded every kind of horse drawn vehicle available and started on their way to Fair Oaks, past the fruit laden orchards of the Orange Vale Colony.

That evening, they gathered in the rudely constructed Fair Oaks "hotel." Tents were put up to add to the accommodations. A huge bonfire was lit on the bluffs of the river and men gathered around in their shirtsleeves and heard of snow falling in Chicago and zero temperatures in the Northeastern States. They studied subdivision maps and dreamed of the health, wealth and happiness that would be theirs in this agricultural Utopia.

And thus, the Fair Oaks Colony came into existence. The population of the Colony grew steadily but the Howard and Wilson Publishing Company withdrew from the Colony, having failed in their promise to put in larger water pipes. In the fall of 1900, another period of activity was inaugurated in the Colony with the incorporation of the Fair Oaks Development Co. with offices in Chicago and Sacramento.