

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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SOCIETY NEWS

Meeting at Micke Memorial Building on May 27, at 8 P.M.

Program -- Mrs. Erma Reese will talk on old San Joaquin Valley College and the early history of Woodbridge.

Those working on rural school history, please bring in your reports.

The ninth annual meeting of the Conference of California Historical Societies will be held on June 20, 21, 22, 1963, at the Bellevue Hotel, San Francisco. An interesting program and a bus tour of San Francisco's Historical Exhibits has been planned. Our members would find this an interesting event.

Tour chairman, Emmett Perry, announces a tour to Corral Hollow, Sat. May 25th.. Meet at 9 A.M. at the home of Earle E. Williams, 1581 Holly Drive, Tracy. Bring a sack lunch and enjoy a picnic with friends of South San Joaquin County at Caswell State Park. On the way home we will visit the Miller Ranch Collection of Old Transportation. Come and share in the fun! Those desiring tour transportation call EN 9-4578.

HISTORIC FACTS

The society recently received a letter from a gentleman inquiring about the history of Tracy. The letter was turned over to Earle E. Williams, a long time resi- of that city, who wrote this reply. Believing others will be interested, we are in- cluding it in our bulletin.

HISTORY OF TRACY

Mr. Lathrop Tracy, the man who gave his name to Tracy, was connected with the Central Pacific Railroad, which afterward became the Southern Pacific Railroad. He was a relative of Leland Stanford, one of the "Big Four" responsible for building the railroad, and was closely associated with Leland Stanford at the time the City of Tracy was established in 1878.

It appears that when the railroads were being built it was common practice to name the towns after officials of the railroad, or members of their families. In about 1870 to 1872 a railroad was built by the Southern Pacific from Lathrop in San Joaquin County, up the valley by way of Tehachapi Pass to Los Angeles. At that time Lathrop was a station on the Central Pacific. It had been named after Leland Stanford's wife, whose maiden name was Lathrop.

Modesto was located on this line. It was first called Ralston, after an of- ficial of the Central Pacific Railroad. The story goes that being a very modest man, Mr. Ralston declined the honor, and so the name was changed to Modesto, Spanish for "modest."

Some time before 1878 the Southern Pacific started building a line through Martinez and down the West Side of the San Joaquin River to Fresno. In 1873 it crossed the old Central Pacific at a place where Tracy is now located. Before this, there was a coaling station on the Central Pacific at the foot of the Altamont grade

4

about three miles west of the place where Tracy is now situated. Its name was Ellis Station, or Ellis, and it was located at the place the coal wagon road from the Corral Hollow coal mines crossed the Central Pacific on its way to Mohr's Landing on Old River, near the present Bethany.

Realizing that the place where the railroads crossed would be the division point the whole town of Ellis moved itself, lock, stock, and barrel, to the new location, which was named Tracy by the officials of the railroad. The station of Ellis consisted of about 49 structures, business buildings of all kinds, and they were all moved by wagon to the new location. They formed a solid line of buildings in the new location nearly a half mile long, along the north side of what was then called Front Street on the north side of the railroad. The name of the street was later changed to "Sixth Street", which is its name today.

A man by the name of John Brockman was the railroad contractor at the time, and his teams and wagons moved the town. The first hotels were the Tracy Hotel, conducted by Edward Wackschuth, The Castle Hotel and the San Joaquin Hotel, the latter managed by Charles Ludwig. By 1838 Front Street was almost solidly lined with business houses, when a fire swept through June 19 of that year and destroyed entirely the business part of Tracy. The fire started in Mrs. Mary Mannis's restaurant near the corner of North D Street. It destroyed four buildings belonging to Mrs. Anna Fairchild; the Mann restaurant; Mrs. Kepler's vegetable stand; D. Silverstein Dry Goods; Edward Curran, Commercial Hotel; Peter Kalni, saloon, C.A.D. Burchske, four stores; Lydia Cox, millinery; C. A. Deglisy, grocery store and postoffice; Charles A. Slack, Arlington Hotel; Fabian and Co., general merchandise; Henry Ludwig, saloon; Odd Fellow's Building; Henry Statemaon, saloon; Grant Wilson, dry goods; Dr. J. L. Murrell's office; F. G. Housken's office and law library; Canale Bros., general store Mrs. Maurice Byrnes, bakery; Ernest Gieseke, livery stable. These buildings were all of wooden construction and they were all wiped out by the fire.

I came to Tracy in July of 1910 and knew most of the original settlers I have mentioned, besides many of the railroad men and the farmers. There was nobody by the name of Tracy among them, and if there were, he was not prominent and had nothing to do with the naming of the town.

A picture of Mr. Lathrop Tracy was on display in the old City Hall in Tracy until a year or so ago, when the City Hall was removed to Wainwright Village. I imagine the picture is in storage now. I will try to locate it and have it copied, as I believe it is the only copy in existence.

The people who first owned the land that Tracy was built on were the Parker family. There were two brothers, Adam Parker and Lew Parker, and I knew them very well. At the present time Mr. George Parker, a son and one of the last surviving members of the family, is giving a lot of old relics, papers, etc., of the family to the City of Tracy. As a member of the City Council, I have been appointed by the Mayor to find a place of safe-keeping for them in our Library. As a young man, George Parker was an athlete with the Olympic Club. He won the world's record in a foot race in Australia and was known for many years as "the fastest man in the world." He is leaving many trophies to the City.