

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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SOCIETY NEWS

Our annual pot-luck dinner meeting will be held at Micke Memorial Building on June 28. The program will be on the Stockton Rural Cemetery and its famous people; Mr. Kennedy will be the speaker.

On May 1st. we had a very interesting guided tour through Grass Valley and Nevada City. This was made by chartered bus.

On our May 24th meeting we had an enlightening account of the Lodi Fire Department by George Polenske, retired fire chief.

HISTORIC FACTS

We are including some interesting facts about Clements which were condensed for us by Mrs. D. S. Bonebrake.

PIONEER INFLUENCE IN CLEMENTS

Clements, situated in the north east section of the county has an interesting background. Not only is the little town a hub for surrounding agricultural industry, but once a year it is the scene of a huge gathering (now called the "Clements Buckaroo Stampede") that dates back before the turn of the century. The history of Clements is the story of its founders; one of the most outstanding was Thomas Clements.

The site of the town originated with its convenience as a stopping place for travelers enroute from the coast and the valley to the mines of Jackson and Mokelumne Hill. The first route apparently passed close to the banks of the Mokelumne River a mile north of the present town. A marker has been put up at this spot. It is across the road from the site of the cemetery.

Our first recorded date begins with the story of Judge David L. S. Terry and his purchase of land. This was the year 1850. Terry, one of California's colorful settlers, came to the valley after the San Francisco Vigilantes released him for Fort Gunny Bags where he was incarcerated for his part in a stabbing. Twenty years after making the purchase Terry sold ground to Thomas Clements.

We are told that Judge Terry bought machinery and other equipment from B. F. Langford who had a sawmill on the banks of the Mokelumne near Lockeford. Langford had planned to use the river to transport logs and lumber, but the idea didn't work out. When the venture failed he was glad to sell to Terry and to personally supervise the construction of a flour mill. Langford added to machinery on hand by building equipment at a machine shop in Stockton to complete the new industry for Terry. The mill was in operation by

1855, but burned a year later. It was rebuilt, then sold to S. L. Magee who ran the business for 20 years.

Poland House, a stage and teamster station a mile or so east of the present town was put up in 1852 to serve travelers going to and from the mines of the Sierra Nevadas. After the death of George Poland, the stopping place was taken over by Bragg and Dougherty who in turn sold to Daniel Gillies. By 1865 a post office was set up in the building and Gillies became first postmaster. He also served as Justice of the Peace. Four years later the community built its first school on the Prince Athearn ranch near the banks of the Mokelumne. It was near the cemetery and the afore mentioned marker commemorating the site of Judge Terry's Lone Star Mill. Incidentally, the Clements 4-H Club put the marker up in 1950. But to go back to the first school, history tells us that P. A. Athearn, for whom it was named, served the early day community as Justice of the Peace in the Elliott township which includes Clements.

Christian Megerle built a hotel in 1857 where the George Clements home was later constructed. Mrs. Flanders operated the Megerle House until 1862; thus, before the advent of Thomas Clements in 1871, we find a community taking form.

Ten years after Thomas Clements moved to the valley the town was established. This was the year the San Joaquin Sierra Nevada Narrow Gauge railroad went through and the post office was moved from Poland House. Moses Bruml and Charles Bamert came from Lockeford to open a general merchandise store. Bamert became first postmaster.

Will Whipple held the postmaster position after Bamert. Dr. and Mrs. Priestly followed, serving until around 1889. In 1893 we find the name of Celia Gillies listed. She served until 1933. The post office was in the Friedberger store but was later moved. Celia Gillies combined duties in handling mail with duties as librarian for the San Joaquin Free Library which was started in Clements around 1893. She was later assisted in the library work by her sister Sallie Gillies.

The first newspaper was published around 1893 and in the same year the town lost its founder, Thomas Clements. In his twenty years in Clements much had been accomplished. He had put up three brick buildings not long after his arrival. The bricks were made on his property by Chinese who were hired as laborers in the brickyard. We are told that when the school was moved from the bottomland near the river it was built of brick from the Clements property. It will be recalled the first school on the Prince Athearn ground was put up in 1869. The second was constructed in 1877, and although it retained the name of Athearn it was situated on land donated by S. L. Magee.

Clements was not without medical care in the early days. Dr. Jim Priestly arrived in 1884. He practiced until his death in 1907. Dr. Grant moved to Clements in the mid 1880's and Monty White, the 'horse doctor' arrived in 1892. The latter worked for Mr. Fox, who had race horses and a race track on his place on the bottom land.

A year after the school was relocated a Mr. Lukins put up the first blacksmith shop. This seems to have been one of the most profitable early day ventures, and at one time Clements had four going strong all at one time.

A two story brick building to be used as a hotel and bar was erected in 1882 by Young and George Ringer. One portion was used as a barber shop. Danile Marceau opened a saloon in 1878, and we are told that Seraphin Marceau established a hotel in 1882, possibly in connection with the above mentioned saloon. Important in early history for Clements is the Farmers Trade Union. It bought out the merchandise business started by Bruml and Bamert.

We are told that the town is built on Christy land as well as on ground belonging to Magee and Clements. The Water supply originated with a deep well. Numerous attempts failed in the need to supply the town, and success in this did not materialize until after the turn of the century. It wasn't until 1931 that a fire district was brought into use.

Lockeford sent Clements its first minister, Rev. W. H. Pascoe of the Congregational Church. He held services in the brick school house. In 1890 the Presbyterian Church was built.

Much more could be said about early day merchants, first lodges, and the growth of education, but the story of Clements would not be complete without mentioning the community May Day picnic dating back to 1882. Each year the picnics were held in the Clements Grove on river land at the foot of the bluff north of town. An excursion train brought passengers from Stockton, Lodi, and Lockeford. The dancing started Friday night and ran over into Saturday A.M.; it was usually in a building in town while the "supper" was in the Clements warehouse. This annual celebration, now The Buckaroo Stampede, lives on from year to year.