

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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SOCIETY NEWS

The annual dinner will be at El Charo Restaurant at 7:00 P.M. on Oct. 25. Sheriff Michael N. Canlis will speak on the History of Law Enforcement in San Joaquin County.

Our society presented a very interesting exhibit at the recent Lodi Grape Festival, featuring the migration of a number of Lodi pioneers whose ancestors had moved through the years from Germany to Russia, to North Dakota, and finally to Lodi. Naomi Carey was chairman for the exhibit.

HISTORICAL FACTS

The following historic items were related to us at a recent meeting by our president, Miss Hazel Pampel, and we persuaded her to use them in this bulletin. Hazel was born and raised in the Acampo area and knows well the tales told by pioneer settlers. We are going to report parts of the talk just as she gave it.

ACAMPO and VICINITY

"The origin of the name Acampo is Spanish for land used for pastures, but here as elsewhere it was applied because Americans associate CAMPO with CAMP. I have been informed that in the early days parties camped for a short time where the town now stands. Afterwards the word CAMP was converted into "ACAMPO."

The first people in this vicinity were Mokolkos Indians. They lived along the Mokelumne River where fish and other foods abounded. As children, my brother and I learned much about these Indians, as we were born on Tracy Lake Ranch, which my father, Dave Pampel, rented in 1900. There we often found beads, arrow-heads, pestiles and mortars.

Fifty years ago Tracy Lake was a favorite place for fishing and boating. It has now been drained, and the land is used for agricultural purposes.

The earliest recorded history of the Acampo area concerns Louis Andreas, a member of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, who came to San Joaquin Valley in 1825. He sickened and died and was buried at a location which later became the pioneer cemetery called Liberty. His devoted negro slave marked his grave with a crude cross and over it planted one of the precious rooted rose bushes which was intended as a gift for some friends in the Northwest. It flourished and was a large bush with tree-like trunk until the modern highway was put over the spot.

In 1852 people began to settle along Dry Creek where the land was free from underbrush and there was comparatively few trees. They engaged in raising grain and stock. The little Village of Liberty was located near where the road running between Sacramento and Stockton crossed Dry Creek and was in existence twenty years.

The property was owned by Jim and Mary Furnish and they donated a building site for a new Christian Church with a membership of 67, and also a Church yard. In the deed it specified that no one should be barred from burial regardless of race, creed or color. At that time Chinese were working on the Railroad. When the Church site was abandoned that part of it was to go to whoever owned the surrounding holdings. It now belongs to Marshall and Verna Angrave.

The land south of Liberty to the Mokelumne River was thought to be of little account as it was heavily timbered with oak trees. Then people began to wonder if they were not mistaken. B. F. Langford bought land for ten dollars an acre along the Mokelumne River in what is now Christian Colony. Other settlers began to clear land. Mr. Langford built a saw mill by the river which he operated for two years, but found that floating lumber down the river was not practical. He sold the machinery to Judge Terry in Clements who used it in his grist mill. He and many others planted grain and got a splendid yield from the rich loamy soil.

Seventy eight years ago, Mr. Langford seeing that this locality must have other farm industries than that of raising wheat, turned his attention to fruit growing and set out 320 acres of peaches, apricots, prunes and almonds. He induced others to plant trees and soon there were 2000 acres.

The old Langford home has undergone many changes but is still in the same location.

In a discussion with Hazel Pampel after the talk had been given to the Historical group we learned she regretted the fact she hadn't brought out the importance of the watermelon industry. The melons were sent in quantity in all directions, North as far as Portland, Oregon, and East as far as Virginia City, Nevada.

Going back to the original talk ---- "About 1904 a Stockton bank hired J. P. Dargitz as an agent to sell land, a part of which was the Langford property. It was advertised in a religious magazine put out by the Christian Church as "GOOD HOMES FOR GOOD PEOPLE". It was spread over a thousand acres, selling for \$1,200 or \$1,500 for ten acre tracts. If not a member of the Church they need not apply. This was the beginning of Christian Colony.

At the same time that Liberty was settled, one hundred four years back, people began to take up residence on the North side of the Mokelumne across from Woodbridge. Mr. Wood acquired 320 acres. The village of Acampo was located on his ground..... According to a roving reporter we are told that in 1879 the town boasted a large general store, blacksmith shop, Post Office and homes. Langford was influential in getting the railroad to build a ticket office and freight depot, as well as spur track, as two thirds of shipments between Stockton and Sacramento came from Acampo. By 1892 the roving reporter doubled the count on stores etc, adding hotels, two churches, two livery stables, a restaurant and the Houston school."

The first school had been built around 1855 near ABEL'S POCKET as the spot was known to old timers. It is the same as the present Houston school. The district was organized in 1860. According to the records Mrs. John Mowrey taught school under a tree before the first brush or log structure was erected.....Those who attended around 1900 recall the green pump house with its tin cups, -- and perhaps a lively water fight or two.

Morris Van Gelder came to the Acampo area in 1887 and established a nursery at the corner of Acampo Road and Old Cherokee Lane. He put out approximately one hundred fifty palm and olive trees along Acampo Road that still catch the travelers

eye for miles before reaching the vicinity. Aside from fame as nurserymen the family gained local prominence because they had a phonograph, second of its kind in the neighborhood. Furthermore they carried it to the front porch for the pleasure of those passing by. Many a horse drawn vehicle slackened pace to enjoy the music. Charlotte Van Gelder, one of our society members, shared this home when she married Claude Van Gelder, the son who joined his father in the nursery business.

Our speaker went on to give detail about other early Acampo settlers whose relatives were among her listeners. She mentioned Asa Van Valkenburgh, father of Alma Cossins; Will Pearson, grandfather of Donez Eddlemon; Benjamin Woodson, grandfather of Ennid Sullivan; Peter Jahant, grandfather of Freda Nesbit; and Victor Jahant, grandfather of Louise Bennett. With the exception of Van Gelder, nursery owner, all were ranchers and came to California around the Horn or by ox team. Their memories were rich in Indian lore and pioneer adventure. For instance the Woodson grandchildren loved to listen to the tales of their grandmother as she sat in her rocking chair on the porch, a dark bonnet on her head, corn cob pipe at hand for lapses between stories. She could recall in vivid detail the Indians encountered while crossing the plains by wagon train.