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HISTORY OF RIPON

By Natalie W. Gardner

The history of Ripon dates back to 1857 when a settler named William Hiller Hughes took up a pre-emption claim to 160 acres near the Stanislaus River in what is now Dent Township, San Joaquin County. The earliest name for this community, Stanislaus Station, was most likely given when Hughes gave the railroad a right of way and depot site through his property in 1872. This was the terminus of the railroad being built to Fresno. The company erected a small station and soon after that a cattle corral, for this was a busy shipping point for a large amount of stock including the cattle of Trahern and McMullen who owned a considerable acreage on the Stanislaus River. Stanislaus Station was also the shipping point for large amounts of wheat and barley, which was grown on the sand plains and shipped by flat cars to Stockton and Point Costa for storage.

In 1874 Amplias B. Crooks, a native of Ripon, Wisconsin, came to Stanislaus Station and started the first store. He was the one who applied to the government for establishment of a post office. Since he didn't think too much of the name Stanislaus Station, he asked that the postoffice be called Ripon, thus changing the name of the community officially on Dec. 21, 1874. The Postoffice was always in some store and the place changed owners several times, each new owner being appointed postmaster. Postmasters who followed to the end of the century were: D. F. Yaple, son of Perry Yaple, April 18, 1881; John W. Riddle, June 11, 1884; Frank Hutchinson, Sept. 28, 1887; Everett C. Dickinson, May 17, 1888; James S. Moulton, Jan. 31, 1897.

Some of the early merchants of Ripon were Henry Bowman, Perry Yaple and son D. F., Frank Hutchinson, E. C. Dickerson and J. H. Little, who erected a store in 1884.

Ripon was described in 1870 by pioneer Frank Hutchinson thusly: "They were building the first railroad through the valley southeast. At this time the present site of Ripon was the end of the railroad. A crew of men were building the bridge across the Stanislaus River, one mile southeast of the switch. Benjamin and Clara Crederick rigged up a cookhouse out of brush and served meals to the workers. They were the only inhabitants except a population of ground squirrels, jack rabbits, and a few of the badger family in the fall and winter. Wild geese and ducks came down from the north by the millions and garnered the grain left by the farmers during the harvest. The land was all farmed to wheat and barley at that time by Perry Yaple, Isaac Koch, and Hughes, all pioneers of the locality, each one owning land that is now in the so-called city limits of Ripon, consisting of one square mile".

In 1884 the town was of considerable size containing a hotel, blacksmith shop, two large warehouses and 14 residences. There was no transportation except by the ferry across the Stanislaus River. The first substantial building erected in Ripon was what is today known as the Odd Fellows building. This is a two story brick building in the first block of Main Street. Perry Yaple burned the brick in the summer of 1886. Yaples store occupied the lower floor and the upstairs became the meeting place for the Odd Fellows Lodge No. 58 which was instituted in Sonora May 27, 1856 by Grand Warden L. L. Alexander. This lodge gradually lost its membership as gold mining waned and Wm. E. Garatt who was a member in Sonora succeeded in having the charter removed to Ripon when he moved there since there were hardly enough members left in Sonora to hold the chapter. In 1884 the Lodge in Ripon had 12 members in good standing.

The first school started in 1862 was known as the Crow school. The ferry crossings were Taylors Ferry at Austin Road and Murphy's Ferry located opposite Yapes original house between the Cady and Koch homes on the river.

The Catholics and Methodists each established churches in the Atlanta area of Ripon in 1878. The Baptists had circuit ministers soon after.

The Odd Fellows Hall became the natural hub of all activity in the town. Sunday school and church, the first being congregational, were held there as well as dances and other social gatherings. Hattie Frederick, who is now 90 years old, remembers that Dad Collard had a saloon in part of the lower floor of the Odd Fellows building when she was quite young. Little girls would not even walk on his porch when he sat out on his porch. He was what she described as a 'corker'.

Across the street was the blacksmith shop. S. W. Dickenson was the Blacksmith in 1880. Down the street from him was the hotel and saloon run by O'Leary who was a drinking man but he ran a clean saloon. His wife was really the family provider, cooking for boarders at the hotel.

The Ripon cemetery Association was established following a meeting held on Sunday, July 2, 1899. This non-profit Association elected the following officers who were all representatives of pioneer families: F. H. Kincaid, President; H. H. Clendenin, Vice-President; Mrs. Maggie Hughes, Treasurer; Frank Hutchinson, Secretary. Members were R. J. McKinnon, George Eichhoff, J. F. Goslin, James Nutt, Perry Yaple, Magdaline Eichhoff, by J. S. Moulton her attorney-in-fact, and D.D. Davis.

The land was donated by the Moulton family. The oldest grave in the cemetery is that of Luizann Roberts, 14 month old daughter of J. W. and C. A. Roberts, who died February 24, 1861.

When Ripon High School opened its door for the first time on Sept. 1, 1910, school was held in the Odd Fellows Hall. McKee and Reynolds were in the general store downstairs. This was before Manteca and Escalon had High Schools.

A new frontier came with the formation of the South San Joaquin Irrigation District in 1909. Dry farming, which had supported the first farmers, began to disappear. Row crops, melons, and almond trees began to appear and dairies began to really spring up. The Portuguese people rented land and were our first large dairy farmers. They built their social hall on fourth street and for many years their celebrations were a fun time for the community. In recent years they have joined with Manteca and have a very large and fine building that serves the needs of many groups within both communities.

As early as 1912, there were a number of Real Estate men busy in the Ripon area. A. J. Show issued volume No. 1 of the Ripon Record on April 20, 1912. In that issue there were the ads of Moulton and Hageman doing business as The Ripon Realty Co; Albert Garrett advertising choice town lots; and G. W. Kuesthardt. The Dutch farmers began to appear in 1916, attracted by the advertisements of rich farm lands. They in turn wrote to their friends and relatives in Eastern states and Holland encouraging them to come to Ripon. The Dutch people built their first church where City Hall now stands. The flow of Dutch people to Ripon and the surrounding community has not yet ceased. They formed their Society for Christian Instruction on November 12, 1924, thus establishing their parent controlled school. The late John DeJong must be given full credit for this venture which started 16 heads of families and has now grown to an enviable establishment of primary grades through high school.

Ripon Fire District was formed in 1921; Meyenberg Bros. built their first milk plant; 1925 saw the formation of the Ripon Sanitary District; Meyenberg built a 2nd plant and sold the original to Pet Milk Company which was later purchased by Nestle.

In 1930 Meyenberg's built the existing plant on Stockton Street. 1944 brought the Ripon City water district and the water company was purchased from the A. J. Nourse estate. The City of Ripon incorporated in 1945 with the Chamber of Commerce as sponsor; the late Hans Madsen was elected first mayor and L. S. Brady hired as city clerk. The water district voted to have the city operate the water company.

In 1953 the city government was changed to a city administrator type, with L. S. Brady first to hold the position, serving until May 1957 when Arthur Clemens assumed the post which he still holds.

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S O C I E T Y N E W S

San Joaquin County Historical Society meets on the fourth Monday of each month at Micke County Park, at 8 p.m. Visitors are always welcome.

The Society is organized to discover, preserve, and spread the knowledge of historical records and events, particularly those involving the history of San Joaquin County and the State of California. Anyone interested in the activities of the Society is invited to join. Dues are \$3.00 per year.

On January 31, 1967, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors officially directed that the name of the museum to be built at Micke County Park be "San Joaquin County Historical Museum".

The California Historical Foundation Institute will be held at the University of the Pacific on March 17-18, 1967.