

# When San Jose Was Young

A Series of Interesting Articles of An Historical Nature Prepared Especially for The News by a Well Known Author and Journalist,

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THE BELLES OF 1829

One of the most interesting pictures of early San Jose and Santa Clara was given by Alfred Robinson, who came here in 1829. Robinson was an intelligent young trader of Boston. He married Miss de la Guerra of Santa Barbara. His son, the late James Robinson, married Miss Caroline Hawes of Redwood City. They have one daughter, Mrs Goodwin, who now lives on a part of the old Hawes place.

After his marriage with Miss de la Guerra, Alfred Robinson was always spoken of affectionately as "Don Alfred" Robinson. He gives one of the most vivid pictures of all the early writers, and he it was who celebrated the beauty of the women of San Jose in 1829. After his visit here he wrote in his book, "No part of Mexico can show so large a share of fine eyes, fair proportions, beautiful complexions as San Jose. There are few places in the world where the women are more chaste, industrious or correct. The men are indolent and have many vices, caring little for children. They are unworthy members of society."

Don Alfred Robinson came to San Jose and Santa Clara twice on business. There were only four or five merchants in the towns, mostly foreigners. Once he was obliged to return concerning a misunderstanding of a business transaction of the fathers. He went to Santa Clara and easily adjusted the matter. Don Alfred was interested not only in business but in people. He wrote of the hundreds of gaily dressed San Joseans he found riding Sundays in the Alameda.

Don Alfred got on easily with the fathers and the Spanish Father Viader invited him to go from Mission Santa Clara to the Mission San Jose on one of the feast days. Don Alfred speaks of the hundreds of Indians who started the night before for the Mission San Jose. Not till morning did Don Alfred and Father Viader set out.

A carriage was brought to the Mission door, invented by Father Viader and made by the Indians. It was so narrow that it was for only one person. It had low wheels, and the wagon itself was covered with brown cotton. The seat was stuffed with lambs' wool to take the place of springs. The harness was a green hide twisted into a rope. It was not pretty, but strong. Father Viader went into the carriage, the others rode.

The carriage was drawn by a black mule on which was seated an Indian boy. Another Indian led the mule with a riata. Two vaqueros with

lassos fixed to the axle wheels of the carriage to help tie the mule up a steep place in case of an emergency. Then behind the carriage followed the four pages of the priests. The alcaldes, or Indian foremen, from the Mission, were in the rear. Blue and red ribbon pennants floated from their hats.

As the procession neared the Mission San Jose the bells began to ring. They did not cease until the fathers embraced. One of the Mexican governors was jealous of this attention paid to the fathers. He ordered that the honor of ringing the bells at his approach be given him. After that time when any governor traveled in California the bells began to ring as the great man approached the Mission.

Mass was said at the Mission San Jose. In the little church were thirty musicians. They played violins, flutes, trumpets, drums. When an Indian made an error in music the father followed him so closely that he was able to chide him. As the people went out of the church there was a shower of rockets. The visitors were given cigars, and the fathers took a siesta.

Then the Indians came, painted red and black to look like demons, and danced for the visitors. They formed a circle, all the while dancing, but fixed in one spot. Twelve Indians seated on the ground beat time to the singing.

After the dancing there was a bear fight in which the bull, as usual, killed the bear, because the bear was tied.

In the afternoon chocolate was served, but no liquor. At sundown the bells rang. In the evening there were rockets. Don Alfred went to sleep to the sound of shouting Indians.

The next morning all early went back over the grassy plain to Santa Clara.