

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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NEIGHBORS IN 1841

The Don and I took a walk through fashionable San Jose in 1841. With us was a map of the city, as it was at that time. I looked at the map, but the Don turned back his memory. The days of 1841 were very real to the Don. They were the days of his youth. He knew all the adobe houses in Market street between the Southern Pacific depot and San Salvador street. He had danced in them. He had flirted in them. He was related to a third of their occupants. As we walked he paused near the Southern Pacific station and said:

"Louis Peralta lived here. His wife was named Loretta. The Peraltas probably had the most important grant of land in California—Oakland and Alameda and all those suburbs. The San Jose Peraltas afterwards lived in Santa Clara."

As we came up the street towards the City Hall the Don said, "Juan Alvarez lived here. The Alvarez had a ranch near the Twelve-Mile house. Next to the Alvarez house are the two Pacheco houses. They belonged to Luis and his brother Dolores."

In 1816 Dolores Pacheco was alcalde. He tried to arrest Captain Fremont for stealing a horse of the Peraltas. Fremont defied the alcalde's summons, said he could pay attention to no such trifles, and went on his conquering way.

At the corner of Santa Clara street the Don paused. "Here was the house of an odd old character, Jose Sibrian. The children loved to tease him. On the upper corner lived a widow, Juana Pacheco. That next house, toward the City Hall, belonged to Louis Altamirano. Near the Altamiranos was Pedro Mesa. He moved to Los Angeles. Near the Mesas were the Sepulvedas. Mesa married a Sepulveda."

The Don paused as we neared the station of the Peninsular railroad. "There was where Antonio Sunol lived. He was the first postmaster of San Jose."

"In this house," said the Don, pausing before the nearest neighbor of the Sunols, "lived Dolores Bernal. Sunol married a Bernal."

As we went up South Market street we came to the house of Jose Morlego. Next the Morlego house was that of Salvador Garcia.

"He played well the drum," said the Don.

Near where stands the former residence of John D. McKenzie was the house of Captain Viego. "He was a stranger," said the Don. "He married Juana Galindo. For a long time the Galindos were at the Santa Clara Mission."

By this time we had reached the outer border of fashionable San Jose in 1841. We crossed the street and passed near the Columbia hospital. "There across the street was the old rancharia. The Indians lived here—not the broncos, the wild Indians, but the Christian Indians who worked at the Mission. They lived in houses built of a double trellis of willows. The trellis was filled with mud. The houses had tule roofs. The Indians wore serapes and blankets which they bought at the Mission where they worked. They went into the mountains for acorns. They brought back the acorns and

made them into atole flour. This was used as a mush."

As we came down Market street we passed the Quinto adobe. For a moment we paused at the home of Augustin Narvaez. Narvaez was an alcalde of San Jose in the twenties. He is the ancestor of the Narvaez of today. Neighbor to the Narvaez was Jose Maria Amador. That county was named for this family. The Amadors had a large estate near Pleasanton.

On the site of the old Pioneer Foundry, a part of which is occupied today by the Montgomery Hotel, the Don recalled that there lived in 1841 an Irishman named Bill Walsh. Mr. Walsh's neighbor was Antonio Ilguera. He married Ambrosia Pacheco. The Ilgueras were of Contra Costa county. Next Antonio Ilguera was Juan Bernal, brother of Joaquin Bernal.

On the corner of San Fernando and Market streets, opposite St. Joseph's church, was the residence of Antonio Maria Pico. This is probably the most famous residence in San Jose in 1841. The Picos had a richly furnished house, several attractive daughters, considerable distinction and true Spanish hospitality. Socially, they led Spanish Californians in San Jose. In 1846, Antonio Pico, who was a relative of Pio Pico, was the first alcalde. The Pico garden had in the rear a vineyard where many entertainments were given. The vineyard extended to where the Brass wine house stands.

After passing St. Joseph's church we came to the house of Leandro Rochin, who was a musician. He played often at dances. Next Rochin was the house of Thomas Bowen, a lumberman. His neighbor was Charles M. Weber, who came to San Jose in 1841. Weber played an important part in local history. Weber's Creek, famous during the gold rush, was named for him. He laid out Stockton. Before Weber went to Stockton he gave to Frank Lightson, for whom Lightston Alley was named, all of his San Jose property as a wedding present. This lot extended back of Hart's store.

In the middle of the street where Market joins Post, not far from Weber's house, stood the Jukido, or City Hall.

On the site of the old Wells Fargo building was the house of Juan Soto, a relative of the great bear fighter. Soto married Petra Pacheco. Next Juan Soto's adobe was that of Pedro Chaboya. In 1846, Pedro Chaboya was second alcalde. He was more famous, locally, for being the brother of the daring Cruz Chaboya, who was a fearless bear fighter. He used to put woolly "chaps" over his shoulders and frighten the bear out of the thickets while the other hunters stood on guard at the trails and lassoed the animals as they emerged from the forest.

Below the residence of Pedro Chaboya was the adobe of the Gregoria family. They had ranches near Salinas. As we neared the Southern Pacific station the Don pointed out to me the house of Luis Chaboya.

During our tour of fashionable San Jose in 1841, the Don's eyes brightened, his step quickened, his hat was at a gallant angle. His youth seemed to revive as he pronounced the great names of 1841. Now those names

have lost their glamor. The great people of San Jose today think of these great people of 1841 as "greasers." They tell you that the Mexicans were lazy. Mexicans cared only for singing, dancing, gambling and bull fights.

As we went up Market street again I noticed on the map a house back of the Farmer's Union, belonging to a family named "Amesquitos."

"Who were the Amesquitos?" I asked the Don.

"I never heard of them," he answered.

I consulted history. Of all the original settlers who came to San Jose in 1777, the only one remaining in 1841 bore the name "Amesquito."

Doubtless in their adobe, the Amesquitos of 1777 smiled at these parvenus of 1841.