

# 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.

## NO. 62 SAN JOSE'S OLDEST PAINTING

Probably the most interesting painting for its local history to San Jose is in the possession of Mrs. Modesta de Narvaez Cantua, wife of Lorenzo Cantua, who resides in West Virginia street. It is called San Juan Bautista, and is a picture about 3x2 feet. The work was done with much skill and reverence. It was painted by the same artist who did the pictures of the Santa Clara Mission more than 100 years ago. During all that time it has been in the possession of the de Narvaez. The first owner of the painting was Alcalde Augustin de Narvaez. He came to San Jose in the 18th century, and he was given the San Juan Bautista grant, the house of which was on the Almaden road, but which extended into San Jose, took in the Willows and went far out on the Los Gatos road. Another de Narvaez adobe stood on the corner of Market and San Carlos streets. Because the name of the ranch was San Juan Bautista, Augustine Narvaez had painted this picture of Jesus blessing St. John the Baptist. In the lower part of the picture are the words, "San Juan Bautista," but the name of the painter is missing. The picture is in the same frame which has encased it for 100

years

In the old Narvaez adobe on the Almaden road this painting was a part of the shrine at which the family worshipped. Before it candles always burned. In June, on St. John the Baptist Day, Augustin Narvaez always took the painting on a pilgrimage to the Mission at Santa Clara. On this day the old alcalde mounted his finest horse. The horse was draped with beautiful fabrics and shawls. One of these shawls is bright red, and is now in the possession of Mrs. Chaboya of Evergreen. Mrs. Chaboya is a granddaughter of Mr. de Narvaez, and a sister of Mrs. Cantua. The other shawl used for decorating the horse was of bright green with red flowers. It is owned by another sister of Mrs. Cantua, Mrs. Berryessa of Berryessa. These shawls and the painting belong together, and would be most interesting pieces for a museum of old San Jose, but they have had many perilous experiences. Mr. Dolores de Narvaez was blind for many years, and his daughter, then a young girl of fourteen, was his housekeeper. She didn't realize the importance of the picture, and she used to scrub it as if it were a stove.

In addition to the shawls, bright rib-

bens and silks were employed to make St. John's day festive and brilliant. With the picture on the gaily bedecked horse, Don Augustin de Narvaez rode all the day from the ranch house on the Almaden road to the Santa Clara Mission. Here mass was said and Don Augustin returned to his home followed by a throng of relatives and friends. Then there was dancing and a barbecue.

Alcalde Augustin de Narvaez was a descendent from a well known family in Spain. One of the de Narvaez explored the eastern coast of the United States in the early part of the sixteenth century. The first de Narvaez who came to California was an officer. Dolores de Narvaez, son of Augustin, married Miss Augustina Alviso, daughter of Don Jose Alviso, of the Milpitas ranch. The town of Milpitas was named Milpitas for the Alviso ranch, which means "little gardens."

Mr. Don Dolores de Narvaez passed most of his life in Milpitas, where his daughter, Mrs. Cantua, also lived. The Cantua family is one of the most important in the southern part of the county and near Hollister. In fact, the town of Hollister stands on the old Cantua ranch.