

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. 71 AN INDIAN FIGHTER

Charles M Weber, the man who subdued Jose Jesus, the Indian chief, was one of the most interesting men of his time in Santa Clara County. Among the old Spanish-Californians who called him "Don Carlos Weaver" he was hated. Among the Americans he was greatly admired. Whatever one may think of Weber, he certainly was the busiest man in San Jose.

He was a well educated German who came to Sutter's Fort in 1841. He worked for Sutter two years, and at the fort for the first time in California tobacco was planted by the young German. He also made a beautiful garden there. He always loved flowers.

Weber came to San Jose in 1843 and married the great heiress, Ellen Murphy, the daughter of Martin Murphy, the patriarch of the Murphy family who lived at what now is called the Twenty-One Mile House. The name of the first Murphy ranch was "La Agua de la Ojo de la Coche." All travelers stopped at the Murphy ranch, and many of the early visitors speak of Ellen Murphy and her charming Lieutenant Wise wife of Ellen Murphy, and to Bayard Taylor she presented a very romantic appearance, bending as he found her over one of his poems when he entered her father's house.

Weber had very little money, but he was a man of action. The sharper the conflict the keener his mind. Although without dollars as he rode through the San Joaquin Valley, he saw its possibilities and he determined to possess it. It was impossible for a foreigner to acquire land in California, and so, Weber formed a partnership with William Gullnac, who had come to California more than twenty years before, had married a Spanish woman and was a Mexican citizen. Weber and Gullnac established a flour mill, a soap factory, and the first American shoe factory in California. Frank Lightfoot was their clerk.

Soon Weber purchased Las Animas ranch south of San Jose, but that did not satisfy him. Before he had been Gullnac's partner three months he urged him to obtain from the Mexican Governor Micheltoena a grant of land covering almost entirely San Joaquin County. Gullnac made a trip to Monterey to see the Governor, and soon eleven leagues, thirty-three square miles square, were granted Gullnac, his wife, and seven children. The ranch was called Campo de los Fran-

ceses, and contained forty-seven thousand, seven hundred and forty-seven acres. It was one of the largest ranches in California.

When Gullnac had had the land three months he sold it to Weber, who signed himself Carlos Maria Weber. The Spanish Maria was inserted in Weber's name to make him seem less like a foreigner. Weber afterwards fought against Micheltoena, from whom the land came, and helped expel him from California. Before the year was over Weber had dissolved partnership with Gullnac. Weber said Gullnac drank. He probably did, or he wouldn't have sold for a pittance nearly fifty thousand acres of land.

When Fremont came Weber became more American than the Americans. He saw that the American occupation in California was inevitable. He rode about the valley boldly taking horses from the ranchers. The Bernals, the Chaboyas, the Berryesses all lost their horses to Weber and Fremont. Today the names of the two men are never spoken by the Spanish-Californians except in hatred.

Weber manufactured bread for the American ships. At the time of the battle of Santa Clara he commanded the American troops, and he was undoubtedly the strongest person on the American side among the settlers.

When the gold rush came in 1849 Weber was one of the first to leave San Jose for the gold field. Weber's Creek has become historical, for Weber there discovered the first coarse gold in California.

He organized the Stockton Mining company, which consisted of John Murphy, Doctor Isabel, John Dussell, George Frazer, Doctor Pyle and Andy Baker. They sold provisions as well as did mining. From Chief Jose Jesus Weber obtained Indians who worked his mine for trinkets and a pittance.

During the gold rush, the town of Stockton, established by Weber, began to be talked of. Weber decided that it was best to try to develop his land and boom the town. He left the mines, and it was time, for his right to the great land grant was questioned on all sides. He built a house in Stockton and laid out a beautiful garden, but every day was warfare. Squatters troubled him. Gullnac's children began suit against him. He was accused of having surveyed for himself three miles too much land.

After some delay Lincoln reluctantly signed Weber's patent to the great grant. The rail splitter was not used to farms of that size.

Weber gave generously to the people of Stockton, but he felt that they lived to torment him. Served with summons to go into court to defend his property, he caned one man. He shot another, Judge Heslep, a lawyer bringing suit against him. Weber was acquitted in Stockton. In San Francisco Heslep brought civil suit and was awarded thirty thousand dollars by a jury.

With years Weber grew more irritable. Once on a journey to San Jose he tied his horse at the entrance to a nursery in the Alameda. A thief made off with the animal. Weber and his friends pursued the thief. The friends gave out. Weber went on alone, overtook the man, who refused to stop, and killed him.

Weber was never punished; the thief was only a Mexican. Besides it was fatal in California to steal but one horse. Weber had taken three hundred for Fremont from the Santa Teresa ranch. He thought that was right. He thought he was always right. He felt that he was a moral, civilized man, and he said he worked to make the world moral and civilized.

He was a good American. During the Civil War he had a flag a hundred and twenty feet long flying over his house. His contributions to charity were many, but he became embittered by criticism. He felt, and most Americans agreed with him, that he done a great service for California and should be spared censure.

He could not escape misunderstanding. He became a recluse, and died an unhappy man.