

DIXON HISTORY



Dixon Train Station

VOLUME 3 • SPRING 1995

Dairy City <i>by Emily Rowe</i>	1
Womens Improvement Club <i>by Grace O'Neill</i>	5
Working Sheep Dogs of Dixon <i>by Robert Brown</i>	13
Maine Prairie <i>by Lucy Vassar</i>	15

Journal of The Dixon Historical Society

DEDICATED TO MARION PHILLIPS



This issue of Dixon History is dedicated to Marion Phillips, an active and valuable member of The Dixon Historical Society. Born into a prominent Dixon family, she attended Currey School and Dixon Union High School. She received the Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California at Berkeley and earned her Secondary Credential at College of Pacific, Stockton. Returning to Dixon High School, she taught Mathematics and Physical Education for five years. From 1942 to 1947 she worked as a program assistant at USO Clubs in Washington State and California. She served at Sacramento High School for 30 years, 16 in the Mathematics Department and 14 as Registrar, verifying students' enrollments, class schedules and eligibility for graduation. Travels have taken her to Central and South America, Europe and East Africa, Canada, and all but three of the 50 United States. Among her current activities are California Retired Teachers Association (local Division Treasurer) and The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International (local chapter and state committees). She commutes from Sacramento to attend our meetings and to work on each of our issues of Dixon History. She not only has driven to Dixon many times to ready each issue for publication, but has taken home an occasional manuscript to retype and reassemble into a form presentable for the publisher. She is generous with her time and her talents, and much of the success of our magazine can certainly be laid at the door of this special lady. Thank you, Marion.

"DAIRY CITY"

Emily Rowe



When northern Solano County was first settled in the mid-1800s the agricultural emphasis was fruit orchards in the hills north of Vacaville and grain grown as a dry land crop out on the flatlands. This was the hey-day of the wagons (and dust!) being driven through Dixon to Maine Prairie, Napa and elsewhere, laden with barley to be shipped all over the world.

More and more farmers were coming into this area, and many people of German origin were adding their numbers to the original settlers from eastern states. Most of the roads surrounding Dixon carry the names of these early farm families.

The coming of the railroad provided a local destination for the grain, which remained the major crop until the advent of irrigation. Prior to the turn of the century, crops were planted only every other year or every third year as a method of increasing available soil nutrients; after planting, the farmer could do no more than hope for rain.

However, a unique formation of soil types was discovered in the area. The Dixon Ridge is a prism-

shaped alluvial deposit of silty clay loam originating from Putah Creek, running southeast and tapering off about four miles beyond Dixon. Water close to the surface as in heavy clay adobe soils, drops rapidly when pumping begins. The Dixon Ridge area was underlain by many layers of water-bearing gravel, enabling farmers around Dixon to have a plentiful water supply and, therefore, raise excellent crops of alfalfa.

This was the period when Dixon labeled itself the "Dairy City." Farming emphasized alfalfa and milk, because, with the great success in growing alfalfa, the dairy industry came to Dixon. The following statement was made in promotional literature published by Sunset Magazine around 1914: "Dixon is now known as the Dairy City. It is a title well earned. The prime essentials to successful dairying are good feed, pure water, temperate climate and clean surroundings. All of these Dixon enjoys in abundance." The dairy that really put Dixon on the map was the Timm Certified Dairy. Located at the north end of Doyle Lane, the farm and buildings were clearly visible from both the trains passing nearby as well as the major road to town. For years people remember

the advertisement painted on the roof of the barn - "the world's largest certified dairy"!

The Timm Certified Dairy, established by Henry R. Timm, began operation in 1910 and soon was milking over 300 cows. Milk was provided to San Francisco, Oakland, some smaller cities in the Bay Area, Sacramento and the local area, and also supplied to the Southern Pacific diners. The Timm dairy began achieving its success due to rigid rules, frequent inspection by men appointed by the Milk Commissioners, and the cooperation of those who produced the milk. The certification required each cow to be free of tuberculosis. Stringent sterilization procedures were to be followed by all milkers as well as handlers of the product to the eventual consumers. Certification of milk led the way to the adoption of state laws, resulting in the present high standards in the milk industry today.

In its time, certification of milk served a purpose. In the 1920s with the development of pasteurization and strict purity regulations, certification was no longer necessary. By this time, Olin Timm's father had died, and the Dairy had been sold to the Doyle family. The Timm Certified Dairy certainly had a significant impact on Dixon.

One of the long-reaching effects was that Portuguese milkers were hired to work at the dairy, many coming from the Azores Islands. They later brought

over their families and started dairies themselves. They developed their own labor supply as rapidly as was physically possible - the Nunes family had fourteen children! Of the thirty dairies around Dixon at the beginning of the 1920s, some dairy farmers included the Nunes, George, Bello, Mello, Brazil, Perreira and Dutra families. As you can see from the list accompanying this article, many descendants of these original milkers still live in Dixon.

It was also during the alfalfa period that Bill Weyand shifted his family's flour milling business to the grinding of alfalfa. The milled alfalfa was shipped to feedmills from the still-standing old grain towers in downtown Dixon.

Another dairy operation that added greatly to Dixon's "Dairy City" reputation was the dairy owned and operated by Roy Gill on Currey Road. Since this was also located near the main highway, the large dairy of around 500 cows was easily visible to everyone traveling to Dixon during the mid-twenties, thirties and forties. (The establishment of the Milk Farm Restaurant with its unique neon sign near the Gill Dairy, although under separate ownership, also identified Dixon as a known milk producing area to travelers.)

During the years the Gill Dairy was operating it was the largest dairy in the area, with bunkhouses to provide quarters for all the men needed for the hand



milking. It is noteworthy that the Gill Dairy supplied one-fifth of the milk to the Dairy Delivery Company, (later Bordens) that served the entire city of San Francisco. Even with the advent of milking machines, Roy Gill preferred to continue the hand-milking as long as feasible, but eventually ceased the dairy operation after World War II.

A local business had its beginnings at the Gill Dairy. Since the quantity of milk being produced necessitated getting it to market in the Bay Area as quickly as possible, the Gills could not afford to wait for the trains for deliveries, as was customary for other dairies in this area; therefore, the first refrigerated trucks were designed and built to haul the milk directly from the farm. This phase of the Gill operation was managed by Walter Fuchslin starting in the mid-1920s. From this trucking experience, the Fuchslin family later established their own Valley Livestock Trucking Business which is still in operation in Dixon today.

At the time when Dixon was "Dairy City," local/area creameries began to be established to process the growing milk supply. Dixon had its own Dixon Creamery located downtown on West A Street. The Dixon Certified Milk Farm, owned by the Hutton Brothers, milked 175 cows and shipped some of the milk to the Bay Area, but Fred Hutton also advertised milk products available to local residents. Creameries in the area that served the early shippers were the creamery at the University Farm in Davis (now the University of California, Davis campus) and Crystal Cream & Butter Company in Sacramento. In the late thirties, the Vaca Valley Creamery began operation to serve dairies southwest of Dixon in the Vacaville area.

Even with transportation no longer a problem, many dairy farmers changed to other occupations. In the thirties, dairies were doing poorly and, where there was water, farmers were experimenting with other irrigated crops. A major impact was the establishment of the Spreckels Sugar plant in Woodland during this time. Plant personnel offered incentives to local farmers to help them make the change to sugar beets, and many did. Other crops were irrigated milo, tomatoes (with varying success), and alfalfa, as a part of crop rotation. Away from the Dixon Ridge, barley was still the main crop. Although this early row crop farming did contribute to the demise of dairying, it is obvious the expanded use of irrigation in the Dixon area is responsible for Dixon's present reputation as prime farm land for a wide variety of agricultural crops.

Those dairymen who chose to continue dairy farming had to address new regulations in the dairy industry. A major requirement developed around 1950 when all milk produced had to be stored in a refrigerated bulk tank on the farm, rather than in the 10 gallon milk cans for shipping. By this time the local area creameries had gone out of business or converted their operation to receive bulk deliveries; the milk was hauled in tanker trucks to the processing plants. The requirement of the bulk tank meant a significant financial investment by the dairyman, and many dairy families chose to change from dairying at that time, leaving only about a dozen farms still milking cows in the Dixon area.

During the last 40 years, the remaining dairies have dwindled to three, principally due to economic pressure and retirements. The dairies operating today are as follows:

1) Innisfall Dairy, owned and operated by the Stuart Rowe and Dan Lynde families on Pedrick Road, milking about 200 cows. The Rowe family started dairying in the Tremont area in 1921.

2) B & G Dairy, established in 1981, operated by the Jack Beukelman family and owned in partnership by Jack and Pete Beukelman and Herman and Ernie Gnos (making a return to dairying for the Gnos family from earlier Dixon days). Located on Sikes Road, B & G milks about 750 cows.

3) Bello Dairy, owned and operated by the Manuel Bello family, who previously dairied in Sonoma County, milking about 250 cows on Robben Road since purchasing the Misuraca Dairy in 1988.

Although the number of dairymen in the area is certainly drastically reduced, it is interesting to note that the amount of milk currently being shipped from Dixon is comparable to the amount that was produced in this area so many years ago! Our hats are off to all the industrious dairy farmers who earned Dixon the name "Dairy City" in the past and to those who are continuing that tradition today. The following is an alphabetical list of all known families who have milked cows in the Dixon area. Many thanks to Achilles Panizza, Dixon area resident and dairyman from 1918 until 1973, for his preparation of this list. We apologize that most of the wives' names have been omitted, but certainly acknowledge their important role on the family farm. If you can add to this information in any way, please contact The Dixon Historical Society.

Original Dixon Dairy Families

Azevedo, Joe, Bill & Kate
 Azevedo, Joe & May
 Bacciarini, Philip & Romeo
 Bello
 Bello, Manuel
 Bem
 Bernardo
 Betschart, Malcolm
 Beukelman, Pete
 Bonora, Ben
 Borges, Manuel
 Bradanini, Tim & Theresa
 Braun, Peter
 Brazil, Manuel
 Bulkley, Irvin
 Bueri, John
 Burroughs, Frank
 Carrington, Chet
 Cecil
 Cheechov
 Cushman, Ellsworth
 Dalgaard
 Davis, Clarence
 DeMello, Frank
 DeMello, Manuel
 Direito, Joaquin
 Dodini, Julius
 Doyle
 Dutra, Joe & Tony
 Esperance, Joe
 Evanikoff, Bert
 Ferreira, Tony
 Ferrero
 Files, Judici
 Ford, Pat
 Forneris
 Fulmore, Jim
 George, Manuel
 Gill, Roy

Gnos, Joe Sr.
 Greco, Joe & Tom
 Guigemotti
 Haroldson, Leo
 Harrington
 Helms, Donald
 Holdener
 Hull, Edwin
 Hutton, Fred
 Inderbitzen, Louie
 Johnson
 Johnson, Troy
 Kerney, Charles
 Kitchen
 Lasoda
 Lewis, Frank
 Lewis, Joaquin
 Lima
 Lynde, Dan
 Macedo, Anton & Maria
 Machado, Antone
 Machado, Tony & Lydia
 MacIntyre
 Mariani, John Sr.
 McNair, Elmer
 McNamara
 Misuraca, Charles Sr.
 Moore, Bernard Sr.
 Morse, Lou & Roberta
 Mulseed, John
 Nunes
 Oliveira
 Panizza, Jerry
 Panizza, Peter
 Parkhurst
 Pedrick
 Pereira, Ernest
 Reis, John
 Robben
 Roberti

Rodgers, Robert
 Rosasco
 Rowe, John O.
 Scarafoni, Joe
 Schouten, Tom & Pete
 Schuey
 Schuler
 Sequeira Brothers
 Seyman
 Silva
 Souza, Ernie
 Steiner, Frank
 Sweeney, Mike
 Timm, Henry
 Timm, Malcolm
 Truttman, Carl
 Vanetti, Alex
 Vanetti, Ben
 Vieira, Clarence & Babe
 Walker
 Watson, Ward
 Weber Brothers
 Woodard, Irvin
 Yolo, Peter
 Youngerman

History of the Dixon Women's Improvement Club

Researched and compiled by Grace O'Neill
August 1994.

The resource material for this history consists solely of the Club's own records, mostly the secretaries' minutes books dating from 1915 to 1994. As they are written month by month, much of it will be presented in diary form. The parentheses indicate explanations or clarifications, mainly by Olin Timm.

The Dixon Women's Club was preceded by a Shakespearean Club. In 1905 most of this group became charter members of our present Club.

The Dixon Women's Improvement Club was one of many throughout the country which came into being in the early 1900's. The aim of each of these groups of women was to contribute to the civic and social well-being of its community. Some of these clubs worked alongside cultural clubs already existing; others replaced them. Their determination and willingness to pursue whatever they felt needed "improving" is remarkable. When they were told Dixon was too small for a town library, they established the first one in Solano County. They had to change legislation to do this but do it they did. These women were women of power, and when they "snapped their fingers the men jumped."

The first President was Mrs. Robert Currey, who served from 1910 to January 1, 1915. Mrs. Emma Jane Timm was the third president during the year 1916. They had their own meeting room in the library basement. They purchased a piano March 8, 1915, for \$300 from Sherman Clay of San Francisco and paid it off on November 8, 1915.

For a number of years the membership remained small, never exceeding twenty-five. However, in that time the most important project of its history was carried through. Andrew Carnegie was offering library buildings to communities which would become responsible for meeting certain conditions insuring permanent upkeep. The members of the Improvement Club felt

that this was an opportunity for Dixon. First they proposed that the Town Board make application to the Carnegie Foundation. Dixon was a small town then with a population of about 600. The city fathers considered the obligations were more than such a small community could assume. The women were not to be easily diverted. The next unit they considered was the Dixon Union High School District, which embraced a large rural area. Investigation disclosed that a High School District could not legally accept the gift of a library. There was only one recourse to make it legal. They found a man who would present the case to the legislature. Henry Petersen, with Legislative ties, was interested, and he acted for them. The legislature passed the law, the grant was applied for, and the District received \$10,000 from the Carnegie Foundation. The \$5,000 balance of the cost of the library was procured by the Club. The Schulze family donated the site and the building was completed and dedicated in 1913.



The next most important Improvement Club contribution to the town was the town park. Many women's clubs throughout the country chose to add to the attractiveness of the community by creating a park somewhere near its center. The idea caught on in Dixon. After much consideration of various sites, it was decided to make a park in the block north of the library and the post office. The Schulze family donated a lot, and the purchase of the corner lot was arranged to add to that, and work was begun. There still was a vacant strip between the library and post office line.

November 1, 1916: Voted to plant walnut trees from the town limits south to the cemetery on the west side of the road and to the park property on the east side of the road. (This was a driving park and is the current fairgrounds. Horseracing, etc. were held at this park.)

May 2, 1917: Voted to allow the Chamber of Commerce to use the piano and chair for May Day evening. Bought a flag.

September 14, 1917: Held a special meeting to discuss plans for the entertaining of the drafted men. Voted to charge 25 cents for the sandwiches, cake and coffee, to put in a fund to provide comforts for the Dixon soldier boys.



October 1917: The speaker's topic was mainly about food conservation and the part that women will have to take in this war. Club voted to buy a \$100 Liberty bond by taking the money from the Park fund.

October 1917: Mrs. Currey gave the committee report to confer with the Lodges concerning the trees in the cemetery. Mr. Madden of the Masonic Lodge had taken care of the work.

November 1918: No meetings of the Women's Improvement Club during the month of November, because of the Spanish influenza epidemic.

March 13, 1919: A special meeting of the Club was called to discuss "park sites". Four men were present: Mr. Brown, Mr. J. P. Thomsen, Mr. Van Curen, and Mr. John Kilkenny. They and the new members were told of the ambition of the Club since its organization to have a park. Mrs. Timm, chairman of the Civic Section, then gave the locations and prices of lots. Each of the four gentlemen present spoke on the value of having a park, but wanted a place large enough for a park and an automobile park combined. Each lady gave her opinion, but the vote was laid over for the next business meeting when more members would be present.

April 2, 1919: Mrs. Grace Robben made a report on the park sites. After much discussion about the cost of the street paving, the club decided it could not afford to buy a park site. Mrs. Dawson moved, and Mrs. Dickie seconded, to accept the offer of the Town Trustees to make as much use of the present city park as they wished. The Town agreed to take care of it once the ladies had beautified it.

Miss Bloom and Miss Dudley donated their \$5-a-month salary to the tree fund.

Mr. Rattenbury offered to let the ladies have the use of the show one night a month or oftener if they desired. They could arrange for half the receipts or take complete charge including the expenses. They took half of the receipts.

October 1, 1919: The first night of the show showed a deficit of \$7.69. They decided they needed more advertising.

Mrs. Currey sent a letter suggesting we buy the Presbyterian Church site for a club house. No action to be

taken until more information is available. Mrs. H. B. Robben suggested the Club give a dance or a card party to raise money for the park. After a lengthy discussion, it was voted that a sealed vote of the members be taken October 15, and to have as many members as possible present. On October 15 the "yes" vote won a very large majority. There was still a deficit in their show so they decided to try one more time and to add a few musical numbers.

January 7, 1920: The show receipts amounted to \$46.47. Mrs. H. B. Robben called for a vote on the park. After a lengthy discussion none present seemed to want to fix the present site. (Fairgrounds)

March 3, 1920: The park was again discussed. Mrs. Almeida reported that Mr. Herbert Schulze had talked with his sister and brother of giving the Schulze lot to the ladies for a park site in memory of their mother and father. Mrs. Timm moved and Mrs. Currey seconded that the Ladies purchase the (Hyatt) lot lying between the Clark and Schulze lots, \$600 having been named as the price. The Ladies were to talk to Mr. Clark, and pay a deposit if necessary, to hold his lot until it could be more definitely decided.

April 7, 1920: Mrs. Schulze reported the Schulze heirs would give the lot from the post office north, to the Ladies for a park. Mrs. Robben reported for the committee that they had purchased the lot from Mr. Hyatt for \$400. Mr. Clark and Mr. Little ask \$4000 for their lot but would give a donation of 500 dollars. It was voted unanimously to accept, with thanks, the Schulze lot, and try to raise enough money to buy the Clark and Little lot. Mrs. Currey moved to take a 60-day option on this lot, in the meantime the Soliciting Committee to go out and solicit money for its payment. If money enough was raised it would be purchased. The deeds to be made out to the Executive Committee.

May 19, 1920: Mrs. Wilson moved and Mrs. Sparling seconded that the Club buy the lots for the park.

September 1, 1920: Put a notice in the paper that the Women's Improvement Club had nothing to do with the moving of the Band Hall.

(This was a building the Schulzes owned west of the library entrance. It was used as a dance hall and for basketball games. It was moved by Bill Weyand to the

corner lot of North First and E Streets. He used it for storage and cleared it out every year in time for basketball season, with spectators sitting on sacks of alfalfa meal. Ray Rohwer was the coach.)

Mrs. Schmeiser spoke of letting the American Legion, which is contemplating buying a lot to erect a building, have the corner lot the Improvement Club had just bought. Mrs. Currey, in answer, asked to go on record as being not in favor of ever giving away this lot. It the boys could be benefited by leasing this lot for a term of years, she would favor such lease, provided the proper kind of building would be erected, but for no reason to give away this lot.

Rented their furniture to the Christian Scientists for \$2.00 per meeting, and gave them permission to have a key.

November 5, 1920: It was decided to have the cellars in our park site filled, the teams to be hired.

It was voted to give \$20 to the fund for the relief of starving children, 1/4 of donation to be used in America and 3/4 in Poland. A suggestion that club dues be raised was voted down.

March 2, 1921: The ladies, having more money in the park fund than necessary, decided to pay \$350 to Mr. Clark and Mr. Little on the lot.

April 6, 1921: Mr. Weyand, Mr. Petersen, and Mr. E. K. Wilson were invited inside to tell of a plan that had been made to build a community building on the corner lot belonging to the Ladies, the whole to be under the supervision of the High School District. The plan of the building was shown...after the men left the women discussed at great length whether or not to give the lot to the High School.

October 4, 1922: Mrs. Wilson reported in regard to the Clark and Little note that the holders were willing to let the payment of the interest run on but suggested that it would be to the best interest of the club to procure a deed as soon as possible.

November 15, 1922: Gave permission for Evelyn Boyce to hold a recital in the club room on the 24th.

The program: Mrs. Dietrich sang a solo, Miss Dill, County Librarian, spoke on the "Celebration of Book



Week", and the Solano County Historical Pageant. The program closed with a song by the Misses Schulze, Rice, Timm, Kirby and Schmeiser.

December 6, 1922: A coffee boiler of the proper size had been found, but would cost \$11.00, so the club voted not to purchase it.

The town had decided to pave the streets. The Park fronted on two streets. Paying for that street work entailed years of hard work. One of the major money makers for many years was the providing of weekly lunches for the men's club (Community Council Forum). These were given in the library basement where, obviously, the facilities were far from adequate. Much of the food was prepared at home and brought in hot.

January 1923: The treasurer reported a balance of \$50.43, forty of which had been borrowed. \$140 more was borrowed to meet the obligations of the taxes and paving. In the meantime the paving bill was looked into and it was discovered the club was paying part of the Schulze obligations. Mr. Schulze, upon being notified, reimbursed the club to the amount of \$130.84. Bill presented and ordered paid was \$8.25 for recording of deeds by Mr. Marshall. It was voted, in order to get a clear title to the Clark and Little lot, to pay the \$50 of interest, and accept Mr. Currey's offer to loan the amount due.

January 17, 1923: Miss Halsey was introduced and spoke in a most interesting manner upon the naturalistic school of the novel. It was proposed that a reading circle be formed.

February 7, 1923: Paid \$583 in taxes. Income for the month was \$67.20. The first three forum luncheons cleared \$25.90, each. Mr. Stanley used the left-over lumber from the Bazaar for making tables, the same to be marked Improvement Club Property. Let the WCTU use kitchen and dishes for Fathers and Sons banquet. Bought Indian head material and made tablecloths.

February 21, 1923: The Community dinner cleared \$251.25. Program: A recitation by Mrs. Wilson, followed by "experiences of the members present in the earning of money for club funds". They were many and varied. Mrs. Little won a prize for having earned the most money by making angel food cakes ... \$22.70. Total member earnings was \$168.77.

March 7, 1923: WCTU asked the club to endorse the movement to secure a community nurse. They did. The historical pageant is going nicely and Dixon will take care of its own episode. Mrs. Currey was appointed a committee of one to correspond with the state gardener regarding plans for the park.

April 4, 1923: WCTU asked for the loan of the tablecloths to be used for the Native Daughters' banquet. This being a newly organized parlor, permission was granted.

April 18, 1923: Meeting called to order by the president followed by Marie Rossi's Clown Song...Accepted 12 dust mops for sale for the Club's benefit. Mrs. Dudley and Mrs. Currey announced plans to have a card party for Club proceeds.

The matter of allowing the members to hold card parties for the benefit of the Club was laid over til there should be a larger representation of the Club present. It was voted to pay Carmon Bruno's bill for \$2285 for work on the park lot.

May 23, 1923: In 1922 there were 51 members and in 1923, seventy. Total receipts for the year were \$2201.90.

Total expenditures were \$1585.48. The question was asked of each member present, "What has pleased you most in the work of the Club during the year?" The largest number favored the "experience" meeting.

September 5, 1923: Committee chairmen for the year:
Vocal Music ... Mrs. Dietrich
Instrumental Music ... Mrs. E. Eggert
Literature ... Mrs. Emma Jane Timm
History and Landmarks ... Mrs. Joy
Country Life Section ... Mrs. Scott
Americanization ... Mrs. Rich.

The Tremont people asked the Club to serve refreshments at the dance on September 10th. The Club made \$49.50 and voted to serve again at the next Tremont dance. Mrs. Currey was asked to continue on the Park Committee. Voted to let the Community Council use the piano for the Wednesday forum if it was returned to the club room.

The American Legion asked to borrow the piano. Permission granted.

November 21, 1923: With Miss Madeline King at the piano, eight little girls daintily dressed in white gave the "Clock Dance." The following participated in the dance. Frances Petersen, Kathleen Hall, Virginia McCrimmon, Helen Filbert, Caroline Sedgwick, Ramona Peacock, Marion Phillips, and Fern Almeida.

December 5, 1923: It was voted to loan silverware and linens to the Catholic ladies. A request for the Club to serve a dinner for the Sacramento Valley Electrical Society at the Substation was approved. Voted to pack Christmas boxes for the old ladies at the County hospital ... and to remake the Club's tablecloths.

January 16, 1924: Several individuals and firms contributed to the furnishing the Club kitchen with electrical equipment. Made fifty dollars serving refreshments at the Legion dance. Mr. Duncan requested permission for his High School "Kilties Band" to give a Scottish program for the Club. This was granted. It was voted to pay Dixon's portion of the deficit left by the Benicia Pageant Committee of \$35.70.

The matter of leasing a corner of the Park to the Standard Oil Company for \$50 per month was discussed and voted favorably, providing no billboards were placed on the property.

February 24, 1924: Mrs. Alexander wrote the words of a Club song and the music was written by Mrs. Foster. (The song was published and sung at Club meetings off and on for many years.)

Mrs. Bell told of the discovery and naming of the Sacramento River; Miss Hutchinson gave a biography of Concepcion Arguello, and read the poem by Bret Harte. Mrs. Timm read a letter written by Mrs. Julian of Sacramento in 1862, about the terrible flood of that year. (The flood took out Maine Prairie, and covered a very large portion of Solano County.) An article was read about the placing of the Bronze Tablet by the Daughters of the American Revolution at Benicia, in commemoration of the early Legislature meeting there.

March 19, 1924: Americanization Committee Chairman Mrs. Rich pleaded that we not talk "America for Americans, but America for the World. For, in America is the hope of the world." And several musical selections depicted various nations: Mrs. Little, Scotch; Mrs. Kumle, in costume, Spanish; Mrs. Rossi as an Italian bride; Mrs. Dietrich, Irish. The program ended with all singing "America the Beautiful".

April 2, 1924: The Methodist ladies received permission to use the Club room.

Mrs. Virgil Robben asked about the removal of a certain tree in the Park by Standard Oil. Mesdames Currey and H. Robben were asked to investigate this.

Program: Mrs. Rossi and Mrs. Alexander presented a patriotic pageant. Actors were: Mr. Alexander gave the history of our country; Judson Madden represented Uncle Sam; Miss Madden, in costume, gave the "Landing of the Pilgrims"; Mrs. Janet Robben represented the Indian Period. "Paul Revere's Ride" was read by Mrs. Hutchinson. Mrs. Madden sang "The Star Spangled Banner". Mrs. Wilson was a black Mammy, representing the Civil War period. Mrs. Rossi was a Red Cross nurse. Mrs. Weyand, as the Goddess of Liberty was then brought in by Uncle Sam. The story ended with the singing of "God Bless America".

May 27, 1924: Suggested that more of the ladies get involved in the Study Club, it being both enjoyable and profitable.

The president reported the Standard Oil Company was building its new service station.

After some discussion, the Park Committee was asked to write a letter to the Firemen asking them to move the

(fire) tower before the park is laid out, and by October 15th. Mrs. Dudley to replace Mrs. Currey on the Park Committee.

September 3, 1924: To arouse enthusiasm and competition in a drive for new members, it was decided to have two captains and have a contest.

For many years the Club was affiliated with the American Federation of Women. Dixon was very active, and had several members become officers in the Solano Chapter. Among them were: Gertrude Dickie, Mrs. Angus Madden, Mrs. Emil Rossi, Emma Jane Timm, Madeline Evans, Mrs. Robert McKenzie, Mrs. Eggert Rohwer, Mrs. George Armstrong, Bea Spangler, Joy Wrigley, Mrs. A. Alexander, Mrs. Rose Townsend, and Mrs. James Wiggins. At the Biennial Convention at Los Angeles, with 8,000 delegates in attendance, many noted speakers were present, one of whom made an eloquent plea for the redwoods. Another gave a fine talk on the immigrant problem, the topic "Who Shall Inherit the United States?"

Representatives of the various women's magazines were present at the Press lunch, also noted women writers, among them being Gene Stratton Porter. The music of the convention was performed by real artists. All the well-known artists and composers that could be assembled were there — Caman, Carrie Jacobs Bond, and the leader of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra being among those mentioned.

The General Federation had endorsed the Eighteenth Amendment (Prohibition) and the Convention was asked to reaffirm it. Each state seconded the amendment and finally the whole convention was on its feet. Both men and women speakers stressed the home — saying that the home is the center of influence, and as the home is, so is the community. The plea was put forth to go back to the fine principle of the home.

April 1, 1925: A discussion was held as to whether the Club should decorate the Queen's float for May Day. It was decided to ask the High School to take charge of it and the Club to plan a float of our own.

Mrs. Timm read a letter from Mr. Herbert Schulze saying that the 50 foot lot owned by O. C. Schulze, Inc. could be had for \$3000. After a discussion, it was voted that the Club go ahead with the work and plant the shrubbery on our 100 feet. Mr. Henry Petersen was going to

pay for the hauling of the dirt used to fill the park lot.

May 6, 1925: Discussion of the purchasing of the additional fifty feet led to the motion that the Club wait till it became known how much outside assistance would be offered before voting definitely. 1925 had eighty-five members.

Mrs. Timm reported that the men had raised fifteen hundred dollars as their contribution toward the purchase of the Schulze lot for the Park. It was voted to buy the Schulze lot and that a vote of thanks be extended to Dr. Hall for his part in raising the money. Mrs. Timm gave a most satisfactory report from the Park Committee telling of all that had been accomplished during the year. A note of thanks will go to all who had, in various ways, contributed either time, labor or money this spring in getting the Park so well started. Some of these were Mr. Sedgwick, Mr. Petersen, Mr. Schmeiser, Mr. Kilkenny, Mr. Ahern, Mr. Nudd and Mr. Van Curen.

September 1925: Decided to give a card party to make money.

October 1925: \$2300 in checking. The Community Council asked the support of the Club in regard to getting pledges signed to make the highways safer for the public. They endorsed it. The program was given by Mrs. Currey, who spoke about her trip, dwelling mostly on the Holy Land, but describing the styles of Paris to the



delight of the ladies. The deed for the new lot is just about ready and they decided to get title insurance for \$15.

A sign appeared on the lot and Rev. Wolfe was told to remove it as it was against the original policy. (Rev. Wolfe, Pastor of the Methodist Church, believed in advertising.)

The Sacramento Stock Co. wanted the Club to put on a play, but it decided, since it did not know the quality of the play, it would decline, and put on one of its own from the excellent talent in Dixon. Asked the Abatement District to look into the mosquito danger, as the old park seemed to be a breeding place for them.

Established a committee to send flowers to members who were ill enough to be in the hospital. Mr. Marshall reported that the Title Co. would not insure the title to the property purchased from the Schulze heirs, because, at some time or other, a small portion had been given for an alley or driveway and the records were not clear. Title Co. was instructed to clear the title at an additional cost.

March 3, 1926: Voted to plant shrubs on the strip of reserved land and to take a chance on having to move them later. Voted to send a gift of not more than \$2.50 to Suisun for their new club house.

The ladies suggested that taxation may be a way to pay for the cemetery.

They had many committees, and they changed periodically. September, 1926, had:

Press: Mrs. Dunncliff and Mrs. Atkinson

Music: Mrs. Snead, Mrs. Madden, Mrs. Cowden, Mrs. Weyand, and Mrs. Kumle

Literature: Mrs. Vaughn, Mrs. Briggs, and Miss Madden

Child Welfare: Mrs. Dietrich

History and Landmarks: Mrs. Bell

Conservation: Mrs. Watson, Mrs. Sedgwick, and Mrs. Johnson

American Citizenship: Mrs. Rich, Mrs. H. Bruhn, and Mrs. J. H. Petersen

Flowers: Mrs. J. Kilkenny and Mrs. C. Richards

Park: Mrs. Timm, Mrs. Kilkenny, and Mrs. Dudley

Membership: Mrs. Dickie, Mrs. Duke, and Mrs. Atkinson

Federation News: Mrs. Joy

Better Homes and Gardens: Mrs. Runge and Mrs. Harris

Art: Mrs. Earl Duke, Mrs. H. Robben, Mrs. I. Beckley, and Mrs. F. Peacock

Motor Safety Department: Mrs. Parsons

Mr. Kilkenny, Mr. Schmeiser, and Mr. W. Morse, a committee from the Community Council, are taking charge of laying pipe.

December, 1926: Mrs. Currey, Mrs. Timm and Mrs. Laura Robben went before the Town Board seeking a little leniency regarding payment of park taxes. Mrs. Dunncliff reported that a family in the community needed assistance. The Club responded with aid. A message was read from Santa Claus, who had left dime banks for each member to be filled during the year.

Evelyn Moss sang two very pretty songs.

February 3, 1927: Mrs. Alexander reported the Carpenter boys had been to see her regarding renting the oil station from Standard Oil, since Standard Oil was going to sublet it to someone. Since the Club had not been contacted, Mrs. Laura Robben, Mrs. Atkinson and Mrs. Timm were appointed to confer with all parties. Mrs. Kilkenny, dressed as the Masked Wonder, delighted the audience with her clever jiggling, and the Misses Elda Schmeiser and Evelyn Moss sang five numbers which pleased the audience very much. Mrs. Angus Madden and Mrs. Kumle gave a very real interpretation of Raggedy Ann. A humorous skit, "How They Made Their Dollar", was given by the following ladies: Mrs. Shangraw, Mrs. Alexander, Mrs. Little, Mrs. Timm, Mrs. Dickie, Mrs. Parsons, Mrs. Schmeiser, Mrs. Laura Robben, Mrs. Schulze, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Atkinson, Miss Wilda Madden, Mrs. Young and Mrs. E. Rohwer. The meeting and the program were held in the theater.

May 4, 1927: The grass is planted. Now watch it grow. The annual Jinx of the Women's Club was held at the home of Mrs. Bell. About fifty girls attended the party. Games were played. Singing and dancing were enjoyed by all, and it seemed the children would never get enough to eat. But, as Mrs. Bell is noted for being an ideal hostess, she attended to all the wants of the children, and all left the ranch feeling that they had a most delightful time.

September 7, 1927: The president told the Club members about the "high mountain" they had to climb, but felt sure that the grade would be made. The ladies all agreed the grade would be made, and in high gear. An unexpected pleasure was the taking of pictures of the Club members by a movie picture man as a part of a home town film to be shown at the Dixon Theatre.

December 21, 1927: Gave permission to the Community Council to plant a live tree, or put one in a container for Christmas purposes, in their park. The dime banks were opened and the contents amounted to \$145.60.

February 1, 1928: Voted that Mrs. Timm write to the Carpenter Bros. allowing them to put a drainage oil pit back of the gas station. Voted to allow the Redmen to use the piano once a week for orchestra practice, providing they keep it in tune. Worked with the State Dept. of Public Health to insure passage of a law requiring all milk to be pasteurized or certified, also to keep child care centers open. Mrs. Jahn gave a whistling solo for the ladies' enjoyment.

November 21, 1928: The afternoon was mostly devoted to Franz Schubert in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of his death. Mrs. McIntyre offered to dress dolls for two-year-old girls. Decided to find out more about the Girls Relief Home in Oakland before further contributions.

Gave Standard Oil permission to cancel lease if the Highway is changed. (The highway was later moved to Adams Street.)

June, 1929: The last meeting of the season was held at the driving park. It was a regular picnic in more ways than one. All kinds of outdoor games were played, the feature being a baseball game. There were foot races, sack races, and a three-legged race that was a scream, of course. There was a fat woman's race which was won by Mrs. Warner. The picnic lunch was enjoyed by all the girls and a general good time was had by all.

To be continued in Dixon History IV (or Issue 4)

Working Sheep Dogs of Dixon

18 August, 1988

Robert Brown

Dear Olin,

If I am to continue this furious correspondence I figured it was time to dust off this old typewriter. Having had a secretary to do such chores when I was at the Buckeye, it has been some eight years since I've beaten on this poor old thing, so I hope you will excuse the inevitable typos you will encounter.

For several years Dixon had some repute as the western home of the Border Collie and this was a well-earned distinction.

You will recall the pre-World War II economy of the Dixon area. Very little land was irrigated and the predominant farm structure was a mix of sheep and barley. Barley could be grown for about two years in a row on a piece of ground; then it was best to let the land rest for a few years before repeating the barley planting. Sheep could be raised on the recently worked ground without seriously puncturing it. They could also make efficient use of the barley stubble. Hence, the development of an economy that one man could conceivably manage except during the harvest season; then there were lots of kids on vacation from school. In order to manage his work alone the sheep-barley growers of Solano County learned early on that a good dog could be of immeasurable assistance.

I don't know who the first visionary was to bring Border Collies into the Dixon area. I do know that my father, Homer Brown, was using those dogs in the early '20s.

Two factors that contributed to the popularity of the breed were the University of California at Davis and the old Straloch Farms (where the University Airport is now). Both entities employed shepherds to care for their flocks of sheep and those shepherds were predominantly Scots.

The history of the Border Collie in California was not restricted to the Dixon area but Dixon dogs were, for a time, preeminent.

George Philip was a herdsman at UC, Davis.

Many students worked around the sheep barn in return for free housing. George saw that they were all properly indoctrinated as to the intrinsic value of Border Collies.

Jim Harper was a shepherd at Straloch Farms. He later went into business in the Dixon area, living in the house most recently occupied by Bud Anderson. Jim had a dog called Luke that was probably the best around during the early and mid 1930s.

My father had an English immigrant working for him, Jack Cornthwaite. Jack had a really good bitch, Lassie. I can recall the excitement when Dad got a pup out of Lassie, sired by Luke.

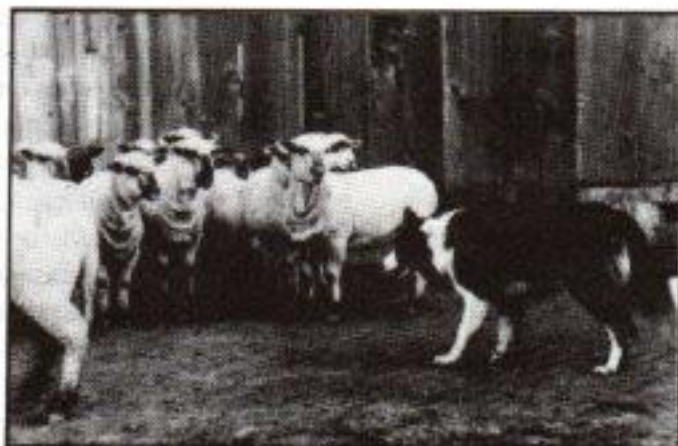
During the late '30s a man named Blankenship was the shepherd for the Hubbard family at Woodland and he, for a time, had the best dog around.

About 1940 several Dixon area men started looking far afield for their dogs in order to improve the bloodlines. Dad bought a dog and a bitch from a man in New Hampshire. Bill Hosselkus and Sam Thompson bought a pair from Scotland. This latter pair produced some really fine dogs, particularly the bitches they produced. More on these bitches later.

During and immediately after World War II Jim Palmer had the top dogs, based on their trial performances.

The first truly national sheep dog championship trial was held in Utah in 1948. Jim won with his dog, Tweed. The following year, after making a movie, Thunder in the Valley - a version of the old book, Bob, Son

Of Battle - Jim returned to Utah with two dogs, Tweed and Tweed's 11-month old son, Hemp. At this point Jim Palmer was a very sick man. As most dog handlers do, he opted to show his young dog first, saving Tweed for a later performance after he had already worked the course once. The problem was that Jim's illness had its effect during the interim. I have been told that when Tweed approached the



pen with his sheep, Jim was so weakened that he was physically unable to properly direct him. Consequently, Tweed placed second behind his 11-month old son, Hemp.

Jim died shortly after that trial. During his terminal illness he agreed to sell Hemp to Dick McCloskey, Dad's sheep foreman at that time.

Dick already had Tip, one of the previously mentioned Hosselkus bitches. With these two dogs Dick pretty much swept the field for a while.

In 1948 Dad imported Moss from Scotland. Moss, particularly when mated with the Hosselkus bitches, produced some outstanding dogs. To give you some idea of the preeminence of his bloodlines, I now have in my backyard a direct descendent of the old Moss, who I have named Moss because he looks so much like that grand old dog.

Moss's most illustrious offspring was King. King, as a puppy, was given to Charlie Null by my Dad. Charlie was working for Dad at that time.

After 1948 no more truly national trials were held for many years. During the '50s the most hotly contested competition was the Far Western Sheep Dog Trials, held in conjunction with the California Ram Sale in Sacramento.

Beginning in 1953, King won the Far Western for 7 consecutive years. He was probably the best and, certainly, the most consistent dog I have ever seen. King also had his chance at motion picture glory. Charlie worked him in two movies, *The Proud Rebel*, starring Alan Ladd and another movie whose name escapes me but it starred Anthony Quinn, Anna Magnani, and Tony Franciosa. He was also used in some TV specials.

Following the reign of King came Reg Griffin's turn. Reg had lots of good dogs over the years but the best, by far, was a dog called Moss.

Truly national trials were held during the 1960's and in 1968 one was held at Santa Rose, California. Reg's Moss won that trial and, incidentally, I was one of the judges.

One of the grandest aspects of a sheep dog trial is the shedding. This is where the dog and handler work together, maneuvering the sheep until the handler spies an opening and calls his dog between the sheep to separate one or two sheep in accordance with the judges' instructions. Most handlers accomplish this by aid of a long cane. Properly dropped, the cane will slightly startle the sheep and create a gap into which the dog is called. I don't think Reg ever wrote a book on shedding, but he should have.

He would stand, without a cane, and direct his



dog. When the moment was right he would call Moss and the dog created the split. It was a magnificent thing to watch.

Moss had faults in the other aspects of his work. Reg pretty much knew how to minimize those faults in his handling of him. Moss's shedding was great, but I still think that King was the grandest dog I have ever been privileged to watch.

The sheep business is no longer as important in the Dixon area as it once was, but there are still some that keep the flame burning.

Robert McGrew now has a fine dog that he uses in competition.

There were, in addition to those previously mentioned, others that had a lot to do with Border Collies and who made contributions to the growth and development of the breed. Wes Wooden, Harold Taylor, Bob Finlay, Bob Shreve, and Lev Beebe all played roles that were pertinent at one time or another, plus others whose names I have forgotten.

Bill Hosselkus still lives on his place on the edge of the Bypass and may be able to amend or add to this. In closing let me indulge my conceit and share with you a paean to my dogs that I wrote:

*Noble dogs, great dogs!
How many have I had?
Thirty? Or forty?
Darned few that were bad.
Steady and courageous,
Better help than most men,
They'd work 'til they dropped
And try even then.
Intelligence is
The real gist of their game,
Smooth is their style,
Border Collie's their name.*

Bob

MAINE PRAIRIE

Lucy Vassar



The area known as Maine Prairie was located ten miles southeast of Dixon. Part of it was swamp and overflow land of the Sacramento River Delta.

As reported in the *Dixon Tribune* of April 14, 1977: "Before the days of the railroad, Maine Prairie was one of the most important shipping points, second only to Stockton. In 1859, Captain Joseph C. Merrithew and John N. Udder set up a merchandising business at the head of navigation on Cache Slough. This slough extended into the great wheat and cattle regions of the plains around Silvey's, and was navigable by light-draft steamers and small sailing vessels drawing no more than ten feet of water.

"In 1860, another firm, Deck and Company (H. G. Deck, H. Wilcox and N. D. Vail) located on the north bank of the slough, just across from Merrithew's. Soon, a lively trade was built up, and a small settlement, consisting mostly of mercantile houses and warehouses for the storage of grain, began to grow. Vessels putting in at this point carried in coal, lumber, and merchandise for the farmers, and carried out hay, grain, and stone,

which was quarried nearby, thus making it unnecessary for them to run in ballast.

"The countryside surrounding Main Landing was mostly marshland, consisting of sedges and tules (bulrushes 10 to 12 feet high) and wire grass, excellent feed for cattle. Prior to the establishment of Main Landing, this area abounded in game of all kinds. The marshes provided excellent cover for antelope, deer, elk, coyotes, cottontail rabbits, geese, ducks, quail, and beaver. Grizzly bears were to be found in the Montezuma Hills just south of Cache Slough, and the Sacramento River supported a large fishing industry dependent upon the yearly salmon run. This was truly a sportsman's paradise. Professional hunters and sportsmen were legion in that area and game was quickly killed off.

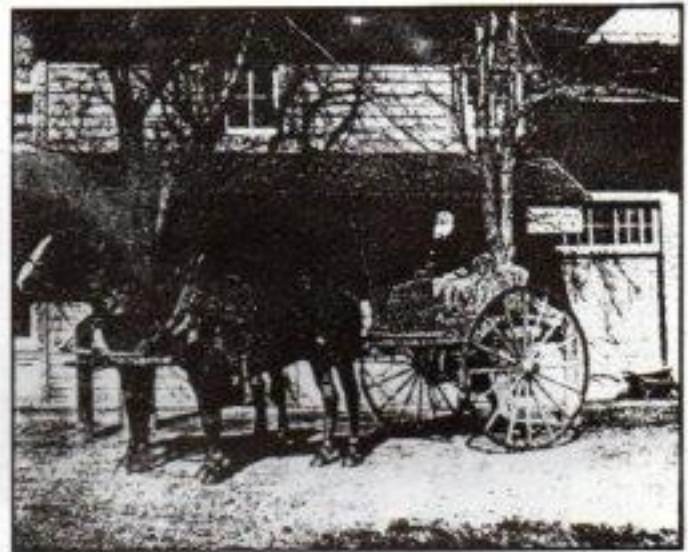
"In the early sixties, settlers preempted 80-acre and 640-acre tracts of land near Main Landing. This attempt to cultivate what was largely marsh land proved to be a fiasco due, it is alleged, to the hardpan and alkali content of the soil. In less than five years, every farmer had found out this mistake and moved on to more productive areas, leaving behind them their deserted houses

which stood, lonely and neglected, in mute testimony to the unproductiveness of the soil. Main Landing continued to grow, however, and by the end of 1861 it had a population of 50 residents. (About this time, most references change the spelling to MAINE.) In 1862, Maine Prairie, as the settlement came to be called, had four hotels: The King Hotel, Cache Slough House, Fort Pinckney, and Fort Sumpter, owned by G. E. King, Rebecca Lewis, Charles Scott, and Rich C. Perry, respectively. Each establishment charged its roomers a flat rate of one dollar a day. In addition, there were two saloons, owned by Charles Scott and Rich C. Perry, and a third called Hill's Saloon. Captain John H. Cushing, Deck & Company, Charles Scott and Captain Merrithew carried on general merchandising businesses, and Deck & Co. and Cushings also dealt in groceries.

"Maine Prairie might have risen to even greater heights, had it not been for the unfortunate calamity which befell it in the year 1862. This was the year of the big flood. In January, a heavy rain began in the mountains, followed by a period of warm weather. The effect of this was that the snow pack in the Sierra began to melt swiftly, and soon the many tributaries of the Sacramento River became raging torrents and overflowed their banks. The people in the Sacramento Valley had no warning of their dangerous plight, due to the fact that, while it was raining in the mountains, little or no rain fell on the plains."

I am a relative newcomer, having been in Dixon only since 1964. Nancy and Bill Campbell, our mentors, introduced us to the Maine Prairie area. My husband, Ervin, had shown sheep at fairs for the Campbells in the '30s, and later took rail cars of rams to San Angelo, Texas, for them. I know that, although there may be beautiful, sunny weather in the valley, if the rain starts up in the hills, and the snow melts in the mountains, the rivers may flow full. Incoming tides from the Pacific can hold the water back. The Maine Prairie area is then "between a rock and a hard place" and there is no place for the water to go but up. This floods those low-lying areas around Maine Prairie.

In 1862, there was a barrier on the side where Merrithew was located, which gave him protection from the water. This was to no avail in turning the strong current of the Sacramento away from the new town on the other side. King, proprietor of the hotel, estimated his loss at \$1,500. Carrington, a blacksmith, said he had reason to believe his loss was from \$250 to \$300. Cushing lost about \$1,500. Beck & Company store sus-



tained a loss of \$12,000. Merrithew's own loss was around \$5,000. The total loss was estimated to be \$25,000. In addition, about 600 tons of hay and some 14,000 sacks of grain were ruined. This loss fell upon the farmers in the vicinity whose crops were stored there for shipment. The hay floated away and ran aground miles away in shallow water on the higher ridges of tule land. Folks were grieved to hear that the people who had been living at or near the landing were in great destitution, and hoped some means would be devised for their relief. The water was 12 feet deep on what had been esteemed high ground, and for three days there had been no appreciable decline in depth. Thousands of cattle and sheep, feeding on sea-level plains, were drowned in the rampaging flood water. On January 4, 1862, the Solano Herald described the town as being "three feet deep under water." John N. Udder reported that every warehouse and dwelling in town had been swept before the flood, and announced the determination of the people to rebuild and to not be blotted out. Some started to rebuild on the old, low site, putting the buildings on stilts. Others accepted the offer of Mrs. Rebecca Lewis to locate on her ranch, a quarter of a mile upstream, on slightly higher ground.

Again, from the 1977 Tribune: "The new town thus formed was dubbed 'Alton' in honor of S. R. Perry, a friend of Mrs. Lewis from Alton, Illinois. This indomitable woman opened a new hotel called the Maine Prairie Hotel. Soon Cushing Brothers and the firm of Perry & Co. (S. R. Perry and Wm. C. Palmer) opened a general merchandise store and built warehouses for the storage of lumber and grain. F. W. Petrus opened a black-

smith shop and Captain James A. French opened a large store. For a time it seemed as if the faith of the settlers in their town's future would be justified.

"The year 1863 produced a bumper grain crop. The Solano Press reported it thusly: 'The crops around Putah Creek and on the plains around Silvey's are better than they have been for four years. As the people of that region haul most of their produce to Main Landing, or Alton, the business of those rising places must be exceedingly brisk. A larger amount of hay has been cut in the same region this season. In one day in 1863, 36,000 pounds of wheat were brought in by one team pulling a train of three wagons a distance of 25 miles from a ranch on Putah Creek. In that same year, 50,000 tons of grain were shipped from this point.'

"It was no uncommon occurrence for 180 wagons to be seen in town in a single day, all loaded with grain, and each drawn by an eight-mule or a ten-mule team. This booming business was short-lived, however, and it is interesting to note that in 1864 (which was a dry year) only one load of grain was brought to town. The flood of 1862 had knocked the town of Maine Prairie to its knees and, while it was still tottering, the competition of the California Pacific after 1868 dealt it the fatal blow."

The original Maine Prairie School, with its porch all the way around, was another loss in the flood. When

men went by boat to check on it, they looked in the window and saw the piano floating at the ceiling. In 1862-1863, the new Maine Prairie School was built on the northwest corner of the intersection of what are now Norton and Bartlett Roads. The school was moved, in 1924, to the corner of Robben and Maine Prairie Roads, where it met its demise. Moonlight School was built 2 1/2 miles south of Lindsey Slough, close to the road on the east side of Rio-Dixon Road. Enterprise School was on the same road north of Rio Vista Road, not far from the corner.

Some historical quotes: "On January 23, 1875, Captain Merrithew has named his new schooner, recently launched at Maine Prairie. He called it for his oldest son, C. H. Merrithew."

In February of 1875, "Captain Stanton left here Wednesday with 110 tons of wheat bound for Friedlander. The schooner, C. H. Merrithew, hauled out to one of the weirs 135 tons of wheat, 250 tons full load. So light in her draft that she could easily float to San Francisco."

A letter from a Mr. Stuart, dated September 20, 1875, describes the area: "I first settled in Cache Slough. I was pleased with the place and I wished I could remain here for the balance of my days, but it is not to be. I am preparing to make my departure. Farewell, God's beautiful Maine Prairie. With tearful eyes and heart, I



bid you adieu. Not long will I be able to boat down the fair bosom of the peaceful waters of Cache Slough and buy fish from the Chinese fisherman, and on my return, swearing that we'd caught every one of them. Never again will I be able to stand in three feet of water and tules during hunting season. I took a stroll to the shipyard today and took first look and found the work of a large new schooner. A huge thing 120 feet long, 14 feet by 18 inches thick, her length 145', deep hulled 12 feet and she will be rigged a 3-masted schooner. She will carry 5,000 feet of lumber. The plans show that she will be a magnificent vessel, one that will please Mr. Mortensen at the head of master building. The lumber trade is brisk and all of the business good."

Some of the family names from Maine Prairie and Binghamton were Luttges, Brown, Parler, Peters, Petersen, Norton, Rogers, Blakemore, Comber, Davis, Zimmerman, McCune, and Meany.

During the years 1886 through 1890, Mr. William White delivered the mail from Dixon to Binghamton and Maine Prairie. The mail wagon had high wheels to get through the mud and ruts in the winter, and, in the summer, dust. After 1906, Mr. Jackson delivered the mail from Dixon to Binghamton and to the new post office that was built on the Luttges property, Mr. Luttges being Postmaster with Mr. Bartlett as assistant.

The house that shipbuilder Luttges built in 1890 in Maine Prairie was octagonal, representing a ship's wheel. There was a circular stairway that led to the widow's walk at the top. Inside, the workmanship was said to be magnificent.

Dan Silva rented land from Clarence Luttges. Then the Rogers family came to Maine Prairie and lived in the old Luttges house. Mr. Rogers was a good horseman, and worked for Sam Silvey with his harness horses, and drove for a Mr. Davis at the races at the May Fair. The final remembrance from Clarence Luttges is of rice being grown in Maine Prairie. Hindus tried to grow rice around 1918. The work was done at the Barnhart Ranch (5,000 acres, from Cache Slough north between the railroad and Liberty Island Road). They pumped water from Cache Slough into a ditch running north, which they built with a horse-drawn Fresno scraper. (This ditch, called Calhoun Cut, crosses Highway 113.) They had a beautiful stand of rice but, due to the fact that the nights were so cold, the heads never filled out.

Grain was hauled to Maine Prairie and Barnhart Landing, which was the next station on the railway north of Maine Prairie. Those who hauled grain from Colusa,

Williams, and Arbuckle were called "buckeye teams." Grain was hauled to Maine Prairie as late as 1914.

When the Oakland-Antioch electric railroad extended its line through Maine Prairie to Sacramento, a Mr. Blakemore built warehouses for grain storage at Bunker, Dozier, Vale, Miller, and Saxon Stations.

Blakemore also built a large building like a hotel to live in beside the railroad tracks at Vale Station, which is on Robben Road south of Maine Prairie Road. The building was built from lumber from the 1915 World's Fair. This hotel was built for Blakemore's workers. Some came and stayed for hunting and fishing. There were also cattle corrals at these stations, with the warehouses storing grain. That abandoned "hotel" was still at Vale Station when we came to the area, but it burned in the late 1950s.

Maine Prairie wasn't a town very long, but it made the history books and it was colorful. Dixon Boat Club is situated where the town of Alton was. There were buildings and warehouses on both sides of the street. There were two swinging bridges across the slough.

We were told that Henry Peters and Wallace McCormick, who was head of the State Reclamation Board, were good hunting buddies. So, our ranch has the maximum height levee, whereas the surrounding area, including Liberty Island across the slough to the east, does not. We formed a Reclamation District in the 1940s and have a levee inspection by the Department of Water Resources twice a year. Inspectors who had been with the department a long time would tell of the Chinese making the early levees in the lower delta. They just cut blocks of peat, stacked them, and jabbed bamboo poles through them to hold them together. Phyllis Taylor's mother told her that one of our barns was made of lumber from the old Maine Prairie Hotel. The water rights were given for agriculture, manufacturing, and other business purposes recognized by customs, and by decisions of the court.

Our ranch in Maine Prairie is called "Peters' Pocket" because it is the shape of a pocket, surrounded by sloughs. We purchased it from Elwood Peters, who had inherited it from his father, Henry Peters. The land was originally granted, in 1872, to Fredrick Frugledorf, and the patents from the land grant offices went to Washington and were signed by President Ulysses S. Grant. The power easement to the Great Western Power Company was made in January, 1927, and switched over to PG&E in 1931. The ranch was that swamp and over-

flow land from the Delta. The State Reclamation Board was established in 1911. My records show the first inspection of the project levees on Peters Tract were made in May of 1952 with the levees having been made with the old Fresno scraper in the '30s.

South of Dixon there are many groves of eucalyptus trees. A single tree, which grows incredibly fast, absorbs six times its own weight in water from the soil in 24 hours and gives off camphorated vapors. The action of the vapor cannot fail to be a great disinfectant where emphysema abounds. It was an "old wives' tale" that people planted, or made sure they lived next to, a eucalyptus tree so they wouldn't get consumption. Nancy Campbell told of eucalyptus being planted in the Denverton area by eastern investors who then sold the plots for wood for furniture making. But eucalyptus

twists as it dries, so no furniture was ever made.

But back to the Port of Maine Prairie: After the turn of the century, Vacaville became an early fruit growing area. The plantings of these orchards extended up the sides of the Vaca hills. Now, when it rained, it was inevitable that the water running through these cultivated orchards would carry soil into the creeks. Over the years the Maine Prairie basin filled with soil. Now what is left is shallow and overgrown.

(Since this report was originally presented orally by Lucy Vassar for the Dixon Historical Society, it has been revised and edited for brevity and continuity in the printed form.)

