

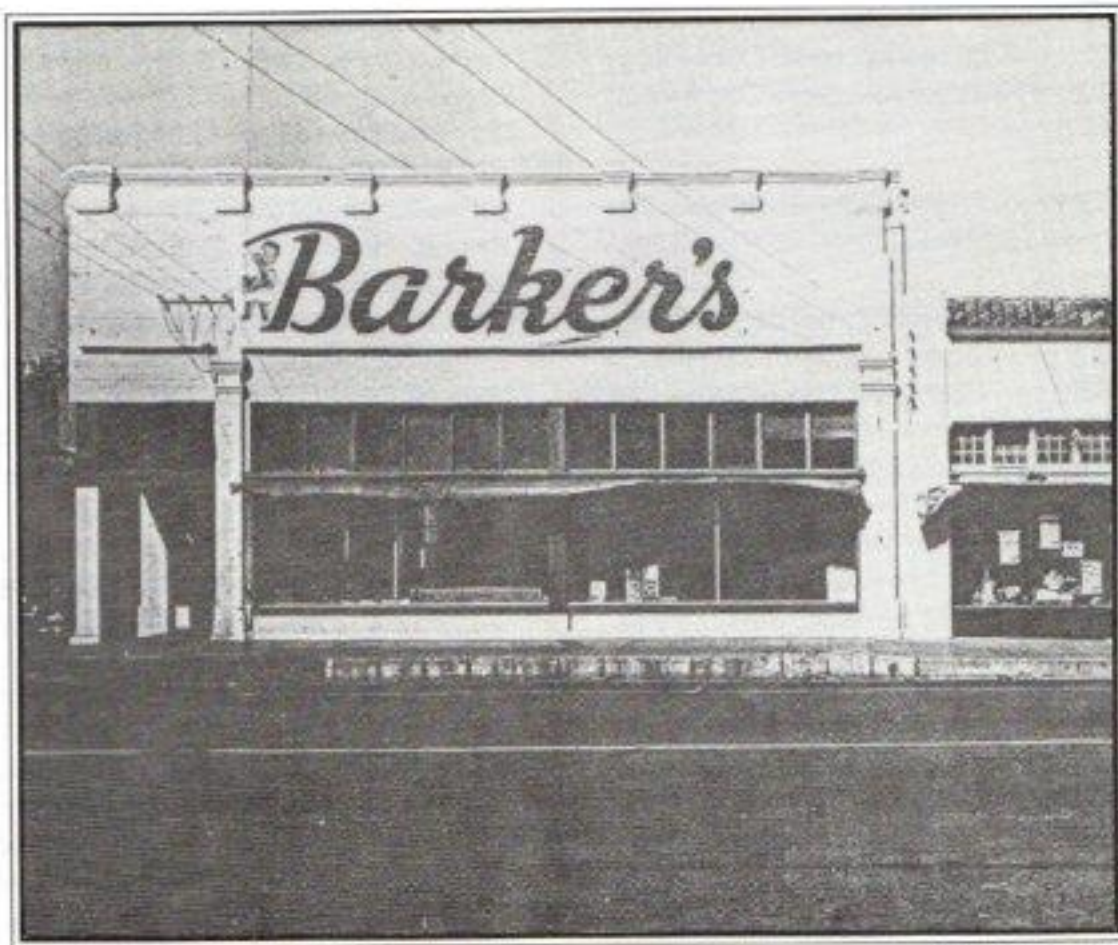
Mine for a contractor. In those days they called them tributors and they worked on a 50/50 basis. The tributor would hire the employees to do the work and the company would mill the ore and then sell it to the mint. And, yes...well there's still a lot of activity in the gold fields. But, my own father who was Elmer, why...and I can remember my uncles at the same time, they would go out into the hills and either dig a mine, make their shafts and try to follow an ore body. As the statement said, there was more money spent trying to find gold than what there ever was gold found. And it still holds true. But if you're lucky you can get it.

**I:** What did you do as a child? First, before you went to work, what did you do to amuse yourself?

**D:** Well, to amuse ourselves, we'd call it work now. Most of your food, vegetables were raised. If you had a dollar to spare you could get somebody to come in and plow it, and another 50 cents to harrow it, break it down. And if you didn't have that then you spaded it. And,

when the vegetables were raised we would dig a hole about six foot deep and about four or six foot wide and all the root vegetables went into that hole. And then they were covered up, and once a week it was uncovered and you'd go down in there and get whatever your mother wanted out of there: a cabbage or carrots or potatoes or turnips or whatever was in there. And then the other things like beans and eggs and corn...we had a cellar, room size, that all that stuff was put into crocks, in a salt solution. When you're gonna use it you take it out of that salt solution and put it in fresh water for a period of time and then use it. No, you didn't have much time for what you call play or amusement, because at an early age we used to go out hunting for jackrabbits or squirrels. Soccer was a very favorite game, especially in Grass Valley where you had all those English people. So, with all the work, we did have time to play.

**I:** How old were you when you first went to work for someone else?



Barker's Store, 1942



D: Nine years of age.

I: And what did you do?

D: Oh, I got up at four o'clock in the morning and walked a good mile down to where they were printing the papers. Then I'd take my papers, anywheres from 210 to 240, and walk another 10 miles delivering them. I'd get that done in time to get home and get breakfast and walk another mile to school. And, I particularly remember one morning there. There was about two feet of snow and I stopped and asked myself a question: would I have to do that all my life? And the answer was, "No, I'm not going to do it." At 12 years of age I was made the agent for the Fleischmann's Yeast Company in Nevada and Sierra County. The responsibilities there were to take the yeast cakes to the different grocery stores, and then the bigger packages to the bakeries. Of course about that time, my best customers were the bootleggers out of Allegheny and that vicinity.

I: Where is Allegheny?

D: Allegheny is...well, it'd be about north of Grass Valley and in the vicinity of North San Juan, Sierra City. It would be south of Sierra City.

I: You say bootleggers. Are these people who were moonshiners, making their own...?

D: Oh, they'd make liquor and they had their outlets for it even though prohibition was...why there was plenty of beer or liquor or hard cider for you to buy if you wanted it. Even here in the town of Dixon...a fellow would...or two or three of them would make the rounds every Saturday night and leave a bottle in the car for you. That would be a dollar. Whether you needed it or not or wanted it or not you paid the dollar. I had had a little background experience in dealing with the merchants in delivering papers. In those days the demand for yeast was great because the only way to get bread was to bake it yourself or go to the bakery. This store, Jackson and Son, in Nevada City...didn't have refrigeration so in the side of the hill they dug this big cave back there, a storage room. And I worked for them occasionally. There was a stack of cheese there...must have been a ton of it. And Jackson says, "Cut that up in pieces and when you get it done tie this rope around it." So after I cut up 10 or 12 of

them...he was taking them out and putting them on the shelves out in this cave. I thought the guy must be nuts. So I got my job done, and I said to one of the other fellows there (because I was only a young kid), "That stuff is going to spoil." "Well," he says, "Don't worry about it." Sure enough, in a couple of weeks or so it got all green, mossy and I couldn't understand why a fellow would lose so much money cutting up that cheese, even though it was only 15 cents a pound then, and wasting it. And he said, "Well, don't worry about it." So along about in September or October we started taking that stuff out of there 6, 8, 10 rolls at a time and sending them up by a wagon to the lumber camp. There were mines up in the mountains, because when it snowed they couldn't get in or out and they had to have the food. So I says, "What! Don't tell me they eat that stuff." He says, "Yeah." He says, "That's medicine." And I said, "That isn't." And he says, "Yeah, that's medicine." Well, years later we made a great discovery called penicillin and even today I won't scrape the mold off of cheese. I eat it. Maybe it gives it a little stronger taste to your cheese. I done that here in my own store...or when I opened up here in '38. And, things...when...things began to get tough I took in, oh, maybe a ton of cheeses and stored them in a room. I made a mistake of not turning them over every week, and they started exploding. They'd swell up and then push out. Well, I thought I was going to have to throw it away but the Portuguese fellow here in town, Silva, found out about it. He bought a piece and he come back and he says, "I'd like to have a whole trip of that." I says, "You got it." So it wasn't long that the word got out to the Portuguese families all down the Valley. And, even from towns as far as Merced. I had one fellow come in and buy five trips. Now that's from 150 to 160 pounds of it. And, would you believe I more than doubled my money on it?

I: How long did you work for Fleischman's yeast? Six years, and after that...?

D: Well, when I was...let's see...18 years of age I was supposed to go to San Francisco and go to work for Fleischman's Yeast Company. And my experience with San Francisco, I says, "That's not for me." So Skagg's were opening a store in Grass Valley. I went to their office in Sacramento, I think it was 26th and J Street, and told them I would like to have a job there when they opened up. He says, "Well, we need a man in Roseville."



The store in Grass Valley wasn't going to open for another month. He says, "Can you be there at 8 o'clock?" and I says, "I'll be there tonight." And that's where it started...Skagg's later became Safeway Stores.

I: And in 1929 you came to Dixon as manager of the new Skagg's store? You said you started in a building that had been called the White Front Saloon. Do you know the history of the White Front Saloon at all?

D: Not too much of it outside the fact that it was owned by Mr. Warnken, and when Prohibition came in you see they had to close up.

I: Well how much did a person...an average middle class family...how much did they make in terms of take home pay in a month?

D: Well, at that time my salary was \$27.50 a week and 30% of the net profit. The head clerk got \$25.00 a week and then the starters would get \$17.50 for a couple of weeks and then go to \$22.50. But...

I: So that's 88...80...that's \$90.00 a month.

D: \$90.00 a month and...

I: Could they live with a family on \$90.00 a month?

D: Oh sure. Yeah. When I first got married...as I say at \$27.50 a week...and my wife saved money out of that. And in those days...you worked by the hour. We opened the store at 7 o'clock in the morning, and there were times that I didn't leave until 12 or one o'clock the next morning. Maybe the help would go home and get dinner and come back and work until 10 or 11, but it was a necessity. Sure, you used to cuss it at the time, but you look back at it now and it wasn't too bad. I was the first one to bring frozen food to Dixon, and it was only a little four-by-two container, and it was a novelty to people and they didn't take to it but...

I: Well what sorts of...did you...was it seafood that was frozen that you brought up or were...?

D: Mostly vegetables.

I: That seems strange in a town that grows practically

every vegetable that this country uses.

D: But in 1944 after I had moved across the street, there was a lot of thought to freezing and we put in a locker room there which would cool to 5 degrees below zero. We put in 400 locker drawers that we rented out when we processed the meat. And that was the second grocery or meat market in the United States that had a locker.

I: Okay, Mr. Barker, earlier you talked about two subjects that I'd like to cover on the remaining tape here. The first is prohibition and how prohibition was received.

D: Well, about the time that Prohibition went into effect, which was in 1918, the population of Dixon was in the neighborhood of say, 700. And at that time there were 17 saloons or places that dispensed liquor in the town. Now, when I came here, well, even in Grass Valley and other communities...of course, I was a youngster then and hadn't been in the habit of drinking. There's many ways of making an alcoholic beverage. Personally, I don't think it presented any great problems because if people desired that merchandise they were going to get it some way or the other.

I: Did any of the saloons in Dixon survive Prohibition?

D: No, they closed up because at that time there wasn't too much other business that they could engage in.

I: How did Dixon survive the Great Depression?

D: In those days you didn't have the things that demanded so much money. About the only thing you were interested in was survival, which is food and clothing, and, yes, they lost money. A household didn't have the demands made on them for money as it does today, and I know in my own case during that period I worked for \$9.00 a week and that week was anywheres from 80 to 90 hours. If you had a good credit reference in those days your grocer would carry you for a long period of time. It used to be general practice in this community that the farmers, especially, didn't pay their grocery or their meat bill or any bill but once a year when they sold their grain. Then they paid the bill's principal with no interest attached to it. Of course, you had to take less money for your labor, but that was the thing of the day. You complied with it, even at \$9.00 a week. There were six guys



lined up behind me waiting for my job.

**I:** Harvest time must have been big for every business then and not just the farmers.

**D:** Yes, it was. At that time we had basically two places of major employment where they employed more than two or more people. That would be Mace Meat Packing Plant and the Dixon Alfalfa Mill, that was owned by Weyand. At that time I figured the two of them generated \$1,500.00 a week in income for their employees, which was spent mainly in the City of Dixon. I know, at times, my total receipts in the store didn't. When I was Scagg's Safeway, my receipts were as low as \$26.00 for one day. And now that's an average family's shopping day. You get two bags of groceries for \$26.00.

**I:** If you're lucky. If you buy big... Well, did any stores have to close in Dixon during the Depression?

**D:** No. I don't think any of them had to close due to that fact; but yes, they were all having some difficulties, but it just took the cooperation of everybody involved to get out of it.

**I:** You were an agent for Fleischmann's Yeast. Well, what was your schooling like? How far did you make it through school and how did you balance the jobs and your schooling?

**D:** Well, if you say balance meaning being there on time, why, most of the time when I got home and had my breakfast, I'd have to run to school to get there on time, but the teachers were very considerate. When I was in high school the Principal told me, that out of 170 odd days I had to go to the office, half of the time...80 odd times, to get an excuse to get into class. He said, "And I'm gonna give you a permanent excuse." Which he did, because in order to get my work done and comply with the requirements of the company, I would have to do some work at the noon hour and then go back to school. But, how far did I get? Very frankly, I don't know if I graduated from high school because the last day of school I went down and told the principal what I thought of him and walked out.

**I:** You didn't like him, I take it.

**D:** Well, no, it wasn't a case of not liking him, but in the sophomore year, we were in the town of Lincoln playing basketball. When we were leaving by stage, there was a freight train coming one way, and when that passed the driver drew up onto the track. Another train was backing out from the opposite direction and...the train hit the stage. The driver had the presence of mind enough to throw it out of gear and it pushed the stage down the track for at least 150 feet. Well, the principal of the school, to sum it up, was suing for \$5,000.00 for nervous condition, trauma and his responsibility. When they asked me if I saw the train coming, I says, "Yes, I did." "And what did you say?" I says, "I turned to the fellow next to me and I says, 'Tony, we're gonna get it.'" And the principal never forgave me for it. And he went to two of my teachers and told them to book me. And the commercial teacher told me that he said, "I told him, 'How am I gonna to flunk a student who is one plus in my class?'" He says, "I won't do it." And I asked the other teacher and she says, "Yes." So, with that in mind I went down to the office, and told him what I thought about him, and walked out of the school. To be perfectly honest, I don't know if I graduated or not, but I have a high school education. A piece of paper doesn't mean anything. Maybe I had to work harder during my life but it's worked out.

**I:** Well, what do you think about society today as opposed to society when you were, say, my age in your early 30's? Do you think people are any different today than they were then?

**D:** Well, only in one aspect. I think in the last 50 years, that the person today has been educated to the fact to expect more to be given to them, instead of having to work to produce it. Now, the old law...I'll debate that it still stands in effect...that supply and demand creates your price, and if we don't get production, we're not going to cure this thing that they call inflation, and that's your supply is production. And demand is what you're going to buy or I'm going to buy, and we learn to do without it.



# Strolling Around Downtown Dixon in 1884

By Ardeth Riedel

The town is looking pretty good, now that most of the major buildings have been rebuilt. A great deal of the area was destroyed by the fire in November of 1883, but the merchants hardly took a breath before new structures were started so that business could continue. Granted, there is not too much concern for the muddy and lumpy streets, but the board walks and awnings are back and merchandise is reappearing in the stores. This is my impression from a few articles I gathered from the Dixon Tribune, Feb. 1884.

*"The carpenters are putting in the shelving and counters on the first floor of the Tribune building, and Wm. Van Sant will take possession in a few days."*

*"W.R. Ferguson has plotted and had recorded, an alley running north and south through his property in Block No. 1, Dickson Addition to the town of Dixon."*

*"Mud-sleds have been in demand for several days."*

*"Night-watchman Meader, while perambulating the streets Monday night, fell in the open cellar door in front of the Mayes building, and received a severe contusion on the head."*

*"Eppinger and Co. expects to build a brick building between the bank and railroad depot."*

The more I dig through my research, the more I discover. One of the reasons that Eppinger's store did not burn in 1883 was due to the fact that they had just completed their new building on the corner of B and First Streets and built this time of brick. Diagonally across the street at Einstein's, later Blum & Sons, was another brick building. Down at the corner of A and First Streets, the only brick building was the Palace Hotel on the northeast corner. After the fire devastated most of the businesses, the town trustees met and passed an ordinance that no wooden structures could be

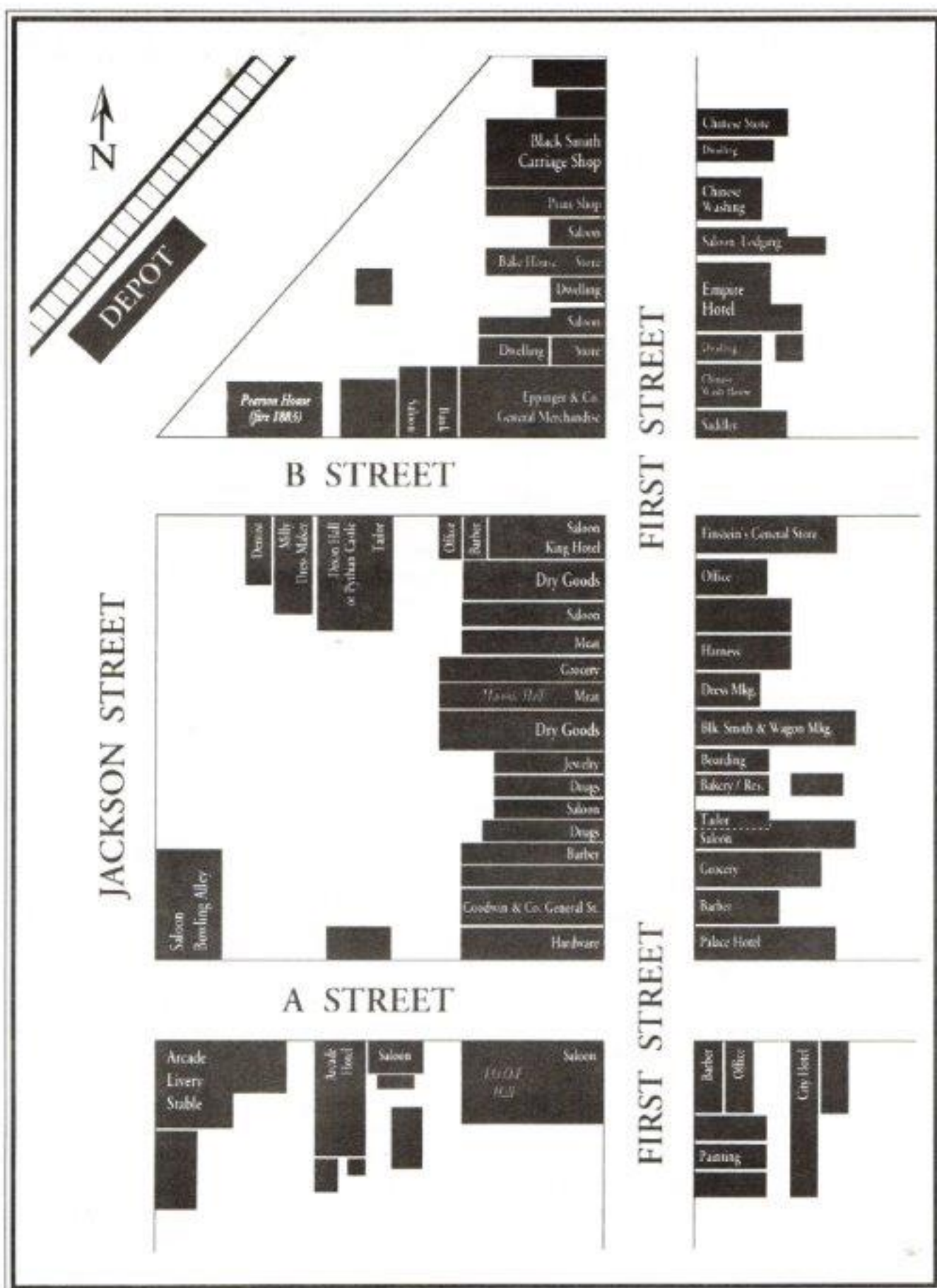
built in the downtown area. Consequently, most of the buildings were rebuilt with brick and a few with corrugated metal. By 1885, I have the feeling the town was looking pretty elegant. However, in April of 1892, along came an earthquake and it was almost as disastrous as the fire. But not to be daunted, our fair merchants rebuilt, rearranged and reinforced and opened for business once more.

One of the reasons I mention this is to reassure our present day business people that this town of Dixon is not easily destroyed, and I feel confident that the downtown area will blossom once again and many of our older buildings will be centers of attraction. The Palace Hotel, for instance, may be the oldest brick building in town. In 1875, one Wm. Johnson bought Blum & Son's brick store in Silveyville and used the bricks to construct a new building in Dixon. "It is understood that Wm. Johnson will erect a two story brick building on the South-East corner of 1st



Dixon Main Street looking south from B Street.  
Top of Capitol Hotel visible left of center.

and A streets, opposite Ferguson & Co.'s in early Spring." February 1875, Dixon Tribune. (The paper was not always accurate with the location descriptions, it was the northeast corner.) By 1876 reference is made to the Johnson brick building as the site of the Palace Saloon with adjoining Palace Hotel and restaurant.





Across the street from the Palace on the west side of First Street was Ferguson Hardware. This might very well have been the first business in town; however, the building would burn in the big fire, and W.R. Ferguson would rebuild with brick. Due south from Ferguson's on the opposite corner stands the I.O.O.F. building all newly constructed in brick, also. Prior to the fire it was the Odd Fellows hall, and A. Kirby's Drug Store. It is safe to assume that the first wooden building existed from 1874, if not earlier, as A. Kirby Drug had an advertisement in the November 1874 issue of the Dixon Tribune. We know from earlier reports that Abraham Kirby came to Silveyville to be a pharmacist for W.A. Trafton, who owned the existing drug store.

The intersection of First and A Streets gradually became the hub of the town, as all vehicles entered and exited along First Street to A Street and on southwest via Porter Road. The only route to Maine Prairie, Binghampton or Rio Vista was on First Street due south. One corner, now a vacant lot, was occupied by the City Hotel.

The following is a brief description of each corner and its changes:

#### **I.O.O.F. BUILDING: (SW corner)**

- 1874-1883 - Lodge hall and Kirby's Drug Store.
- Nov. 1883 - Big Fire - Kirby's moves north on First.
- 1884 - Odd Fellows Lodge and Saloon and Furniture store.
- 1922 - Grocery store; Al Reignierd, prop.
- 1928 - Brewen, Coleman & Lucas buy out Reignierd's stock.
- 1930 - Corner Cafe until it became Frank's.

#### **FERGUSON'S HARDWARE: (NW corner)**

- 1868-1896 - Ferguson's.
- 1897-1898 - Cowden & Clausen manage store.
- 1898 - J.D. Johnson buys and continues hardware store.
- 1943 - Joe Dawson buys Johnson's Hardware.

#### **CITY HOTEL: (SE corner)**

- 1874-1894 - Henry Peters first proprietor, then George Frahm.

- 1895 - New hotel built - Hotel Vendome, Mrs. Morris, former owner of Vaca Valley Hotel new owner. Advertisement: 2 dining rooms, First class bar, Best Furnished Hotel in Town.
- 1899 - Mrs. Morris transfers ownership to A.G. Lindberg & Co., reserving board and room rights; moves to S.F. and marries Henry Franks, who is later discovered to be a bigamist.
- 1900 - under new name, Capitol Hotel, E. Ehmann and wife, prop.
- 1910 - W.T. Dawson buys Capitol Hotel.
- 1919 - W.T. turns hotel over to brothers, John, Joe and Ben.
- 1920 - Capitol Hotel burns.
- 1923 - Shell gas station fills vacant lot.
- 1925 - J.J. Mitchell moves into store erected for a grocery business by W.T. Dawson. It became known as "Our Store".
- 1944 - Caesar Pardi buys Mitchell's "Our Store" and adds meat market to grocery store.

#### **PALACE HOTEL: (NE corner)**

- 1875 - Wm. Johnson uses bricks from Blum & Sons Silveyville store and constructs what will be known as the Palace Hotel and Saloon.
- 1884 - Richard Hall buys Palace Hotel.
- 1913 - Sold to W.T. Dawson, owner of Capitol Hotel.
- 1920 - Dawson's moves into the old Palace Hotel site.
- 1943 - Dawson's moves west across the street and continues with bar and restaurant. Palace building became home to many businesses, one being the Dixon Creamery run by Bob and Colleen McKinney.

An interesting side note about this area was brought to the reader's attention in a Dixon Tribune article, July 1876: "A GOOD RIDDANCE. Francis Stern and wife were arrested on Monday last upon complaint of H. Schmidt, and arraigned in the Police court, upon a charge of keeping a house of ill-fame..." This couple is a whole story all by itself. They appear in another article involved in an-





Capitol Hotel, 1st and A St. Burned 1920



other scrape. The house was probably located in the vacant area west of the present Dixon Florist, and it seems that a lot of lively activity went on in and around that house.

Moving along on the west side of First Street, we find a variety of stores and saloons. It is very difficult to pin them down to any one location as they seemed to change locations quite frequently. Two drug stores existed practically side by side. Coburn's and Kirby's were the earliest. Kirby bought out Coburn's when he died in 1876. 1879 shows E. J. McBride with a drug store. By 1890, Kirby and McBride are the two druggists and Charlie Kirby is now a pharmacist. McBride's is known as Dixon Pharmacy and Kirby's, the California Drug Store. Dixon Pharmacy is sold to Roseberry in 1912 and by 1916 Kirby and Roseberry have consolidated. T.B. Duke rents a store room from Kirby & Son. (This is the site of present day Cuevas.)

This drug store thing becomes very complicated. Anyway, Kirby's is the only drug store from 1916 to 1929 when I.W. Ware and W. Parkhurst open a Drug Store where Mehan's Dairy City Grill had been. Then in 1930, along comes W. "Bill" Milligan who buys the old site of the G.E.M. saloon and turns it into the GEM Drug Store. In 1922, during Prohibition, the GEM Saloon closed its doors, but its name was left securely marked in the cement outside the door. A big GEM in brass is still imbedded in the cement walk for all to remember the good old saloon days. In 1936, Charles Kirby sells his drug store to A. Grussendorf of Lodi. After many improvements to the GEM drug store, "Bill" Milligan buys the Dairy City Grill from the Mehan's and moves his store to that location. Someone must have decided Dixon was too small for two drug stores as Arnold Grussendorf buys the GEM drug store from Milligan and, in 1944, the town has only the Dixon Drug Store.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Van Sant's Grocery Store. At one point it would be named the Pioneer Grocery Store. According to Ina Baldwin (great granddaughter of Thomas Dickson), the Van Sants were part of the party to come west from Iowa with the Dickson family and eventually settled in Silveyville. She related: "When there was talk of a railroad to connect San Francisco and Sacramento, the survey showed that it would come near "Dicksonville" as it was called then. The Dicksons, Van Sants and McFaddens had taken up land, and it had a

general store and a post office. Grandfather Dickson offered to give land to the R.R."

The Van Sant family is first noticed in an article of the November 1874 Dixon Tribune: "VANSANT & BRO. — This enterprising firm whose traveling wagons, three in number, for the last twelve months have visited almost every farm house in upper Solano, Yolo, Colusa and Tehama counties, have hauled off their teams for the winter, and by enlarging their store room on First Street, are preparing to drive a lively trade in-doors this winter. They report sales for the year aggregating \$12,000. In their last trip they brought in 550 dozen eggs, besides wool, sheep-pelts and deer skins. They buy for cash and sell for the ready coin, and we are glad to note a steady increase of business." The Van Sant grocery store was located under the Masonic Hall from 1876 to 1910, when it was purchased by Curt Eames from the Van Sant estate. In 1903, William Van Sant installed an elevator at rear of his store. It was one of the first in Dixon.

Another major historic corner exists at the northwest corner of B and First Streets. One of the largest mercantile businesses in northern California was Eppinger & Co. situated on this site. Established at least by 1874, the business grew to the point that they were actually serving as a bank for many Dixonites, although by this time the Bank of Dixon was operating just to the west of them. Eppinger's began a brick building in 1880 and, thus, by the time of the '83 fire their business escaped the flames. In 1891, Oscar Schulze buys Otto Fox's interest in Eppinger's and becomes manager of the Dixon store. Eppinger's also had a business in San Francisco and by this time all the Eppinger families were in S.F. or no longer Dixon residents. The business failure of Eppinger's led to criminal prosecution. The first jury failed to agree and the second trial was to begin on April 18, 1906, the date of the San Francisco earthquake. All records were destroyed and all indictments dismissed.

Schulze's business grew and thrived. Oscar Schulze died in 1909 but the family carried on the business until 1921 when Herb Schulze left the business and Stuart Grady became the manager. In 1925 Grady buys Schulze's mercantile business. In 1944 Denton Barker relocates his Saving Center to Grady's, buying the store and stock. Denton Barker came to Dixon in 1929 to manage the new Safeway store located just north of Schulze's (Kara



Lin's). In 1935 Barker buys out Brewen & Coleman under the Opera House and the Saving Center continued until the move in 1944 at which point Barker purchased the Schulze building which had been vacated by Stuart Grady. Barker continued his business until the 1960's.

Other buildings which deserve restoring and preserving include the Masonic Hall, rebuilt with brick in 1884; the old post office building built in 1908 and now the home of Miller and Associates; the G.D. Schulze building just north of the old theatre; and the theatre building itself. Two of our "newer" buildings, the Library dedicated in 1912, and the Firehouse, 1928, should also be saved during Dixon's downtown renovation activity. As many know, plans are under way to begin a face-lift for Dixon and to create an environment that will invite and entice people back to old downtown Dixon. My wish is that the present day residents will care enough to support the efforts being made to save what our Dixon predecessors worked so hard to build in the first place. Surely, if they could rebuild after fire and earthquake and flooding waters, we can renovate a town that is more attractive than a fast-food center. Remember, this is not just any OLD town. This is OUR town, planted, grown and nurtured by our many roots, strong and sturdy DIXON roots that are historically yours.



# Binghampton

By Olin Timm

The first settlers who moved to the Binghampton area developed a community identity which has been sustained by their offspring for one hundred thirty-five years. I hope that the following pages will help us to understand this local loyalty.

Why did settlers move into the Binghampton area? It is well known today that the soil in the Silveyville area is more easily farmed and more productive than the soil in the area of Binghamton. The former is classed mostly as silty clay loam with excellent water permeability, whereas the latter area consists mostly of various phases of clay, some with lighter soil on the surface but all with a clay substructure which reduces moisture permeability. But for those who came here in the 1860's the ground was judged in the eyes of the beholder.

It has been claimed that the Silveyville area, having been settled in the 1850's, was well occupied. But this is not

so. Homesteads were being established east and north of what is now Dixon in the 1860's. There is some indication that the competition for land was greater in the Dixon area. It was recounted to me twice that when the Davis boys first came to the Dixon area,



Shed behind white-nosed horse is Joe Davis' squatters cabin, 1862.

they were of a mind to establish squatter rights on the 160 acres southwest of what is now Midway and the Rio Vista Highway. However, they thought better of the plan when they were approached by a group which claimed to have burned the cabin of the squatter to the north and advised them that they, the Davis brothers, would be next.

Proximity to water transportation is suggested as the reason for settling in the Binghamton area. Bob Brown, great-grandson of Jackson Fay Brown, who settled in Binghampton (Bob insists that it is spelled with a "p") in

1861 claims that the first 160 acres was purchased because of its proximity to Maine Prairie Landing.

It should be noted that none of the settlers who established farming and livestock enterprises existed on 160 acres alone. By subsequent purchases they expanded their acreages to 640 or more acres. Jackson Fay Brown at one time owned 10,000 acres.

Whence came the settlers of Binghamton? I have managed to identify the area of origin for thirty-nine of the original settlers, either through printed biographies, the Binghamton cemetery records, or personal interviews of family descendants. Of the thirty-nine, twenty-five came from the eastern states, including 13 from New Hampshire, Vermont and New York, and twelve from Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. Of the remainder, one came from Virginia, one from Missouri, one from Arkansas. There were seven from foreign countries: two from Mexico, two from Germany, two from Ireland and one from England. The preponderant religion was Methodist. The church records were started in 1876, after the Methodist Church was moved from Silveyville to Dixon,



Jackson Fay Brown home built 1888. Restored 1993. Ms. Betty Taylor. Picture courtesy of the Vacaville Reporter.



under the title of "Dixon and Binghamton Methodist Episcopal Church."

During the settlement period of the early sixties, the Civil War was waging. Since the preponderance of settlers came from the northern states, it is not surprising that these union sympathizers, about sixty in number, organized the "Maine Prairie Rifles." It was enrolled as part of the State militia under Governor Leland Stanford. Jane Belew Esperance relates that "Binghamton was chosen as the headquarters of the company. The company soon decided to build an armory resulting in the erection of a brick fireproof building 35 X 50 feet. The cellar was a rifle pit. The bricks used were made at the Maine Prairie Brick Yard. These bricks were made in a trench. A fire was built in the trench and dirt was put over the hot coals, the new bricks were placed on top of the dirt and covered with more dirt. The bricks were left alone until they cooled. Bricks made by this method cooled unevenly; some were warped, glazed or underbaked.

The many meetings of the company for drill, target practice, picnics and other activities had a happy influence on the community because it bonded it together in that harmony and good feeling for which Binghamton has been so noted. The company continued in a healthy condition until it was disbanded by Governor Haight at the close of the Civil War. Binghamton at that time had about six houses and a blacksmith shop.

The armory was sold to D.L. Munson who operated a store in it. Mr. Munson added a second story to the building. Some years later the Binghamton school, the located on the Dodge property which is across the road and a few yards down, was destroyed by fire. It was then decided by the school trustees to purchase the armory for a new school. On November 1, 1871, the armory was bought for \$7,000."

An important task for any community was to set aside a place to bury its dead. The people of Binghamton felt such a need, and in 1868 W.G. Wyman was put in charge of the organization of the Binghamton Cemetery Union. In an itemized billing the first entry dated July, 18, 1868, read: "For writings for the original organization — no charge." Total charge for laying out plots, drawing deeds, affidavit of Certification of Election up to February 13, 1869 was \$65.35. All of this time D.L. Munson was

secretary. The Constitution of the Dixon Cemetery Union is undated.

[Insert A is the first page of this Constitution. See copy following this article. Note: The cemetery was non-denominational.]

The minutes of the Union show on August 12, 1868, the purchase agreement for the cemetery was recorded between Matthew Hoar and Geo. C. Mack, G.W. Farger and Matthew Richards, Trustees of the Dixon Cemetery Union, for 200 of legal coin of the United States of America. This property being forty rods square and lying west of County Road. 10 acres.

Then follows a list of donations to finance development of the cemetery. The donations to be later credited to lot purchases.

Next a report of the Secretary of the Binghamton Cemetery Union. August 1, 1869. Stating that purchase was made in the SE Corner of what is known as the Jackson Ranch being one-half mile west of Binghamton for 200.

The trustees also planted a hedge of Osage orange plants around the entire tract and surveyed and subdivided into lots the SE half of the ground: 118 lots 12 X 18 feet, 4 lots 18 X 24 feet and 130 lots 24 feet square, 252 lots in all.

28 lots sold for a total of \$480, all under the name Valley Home Cemetery. Since organization, 12 interments, 11 deaths, 1 removal to Vacaville burying ground.

May 18 bill from J.H. Fisher: \$37.50 cultivation of hedge. January 9, 1869 bill from J.H. Fisher for planting hedge: \$75.00.

The Dixon Cemetery Union continued operating the cemetery. In 1914 a reorganization took place. In that year Homer G. Brown, secretary of the cemetery association, lists 122 interred. The records at the Silveyville Cemetery in Dixon show only 100 buried in the Binghamton Cemetery. The last recorded burial was Clayton Brown II in 1957.

I have noted that Jackson Fay Brown became the largest landowner in the Binghamton area. His great-grandson



Bob Brown sent me the diary of Jackson Fay which covers the two months of his travel from Vermont to California.

1857

**Mar. 1** Left Fletcher, my native town, to wander on distant lands — never more than 75 miles from home before in my life — nor gone more than two months at a time. (He was twenty-one)

**Mar. 2** Started for New York — Stayed at Rutland over night.

**Mar. 3** Got at New York after dark — Took a coach for Lovey's Hotel.

**Mar. 4** At New York — At the Pacific — Stay good house three days \$3.50.

**Mar. 5** Went over to the steamer. — Left 2 p.m. from New York.

**Mar. 6** The sun rises and sets but no land in sight.

**Mar. 7** On ocean — pleasant over head, rather damp all around except under foot.

**Mar. 8** Not much like our quiet home Sunday — All now in confusion on board the U.S. Mail Steamer Illinois.

**Mar. 9** Water.

**Mar. 10** Water

**Mar. 11** A few small islands in sight.

**Mar. 12** Jamaica — A low dirty place black with natives — The worst place ever — Get plenty of oranges and other fruit besides famous rum — It is red like our brandy.

**Mar. 13** (Friday the 13th) Left Jamaica at sun rise — On my bearth most of the day after high winds which broke dishes.

**Mar. 14** Watter as far as can be seen.

**Mar. 15** Arved at Aspenwal about 4 p. m. — A small town where the ships store coal up — Inhabitants mostly black — Their houses are mostly stick hutts.

**Mar. 16** Left Aspenwal at half past 5 a.m. — Arived at Panama at 10 a.m. — Had to stop for the tide — The town is mostly in ruins.

**Mar. 17** At sea on the Pasific a board of Steamship John L. Stephens — About 900 pasingers.

**Mar. 21** Morning land in sight — At Acupulco about 5 hours — A small town where the ship coals up.

**Mar. 23** Spoke with a sailing vessel in the afternoon.

**Mar. 24** Passed the gulf of California.

**Mar. 25** In sight of Cal.

**Mar. 26** Spoke with the Ship Golden Gate.

**Mar. 27** A wedding 7 in the eve — Not very well.

**Mar. 29** Arrived at San Francisco — A larger and better city than expected — A crowd of people on the wharf at our arrival.

**Mar. 30** At San Francisco — Seeing the sights.

**Mar. 31** Left San Francisco for Sonoma Co.

**April 1** At Petaluma.

**April 2** Went from Petaluma to Corey — 16 miles — Carried my valise — Tired.

**April 4** My first California horseback ride — In the afternoon went from Corey's to Reynold's — Very tired.

**April 5** At Reynold's seeing them gather their cattle — Saw the natives throw the lasso.

**April 6** At Reynold's — A laying on my oars meditating upon the future.

**April 7** Went from Reynold's to Corey's.

**April 8** Started from Corey's to Petaluma — Hired out on my way for one month to Sam Lewis for 35 doll — Commenced at noon.

**April 9** At work for Lewis — Amilking and doing farm work in general.

**April 12** At Uncle Sam Lewis' — An old man and neffew — They keep ther own house — Which is about 20 by 35 with out any floor — We liv mostly on warm bread."

[Another family, the Dannenbergs, date back to 1862 when the great grandfather Joe Davis purchased land in Binghamton. I taped his grandson Bud back in 1989, but because of the length of the article the editors have delayed



The octagon shaped Lutigas home, built before 1890.





*Tuck home, built 1873.*

its publication until the next issue.]

In 1861 Jackson Fay moved to the Maine Prairie area with sixty cows and built a 12' X 14' house. A year later he married Eliza Hopkins who was also from Vermont and built a new house 16' X 24'. He prospered and kept purchasing land. In 1888 he erected an 18 room house for his wife and family.

Also nearby was the Tuck farm, originally settled by Jeremiah (Jay) Tuck, who was born in Parsonsfield, Maine in 1823. His family originally came from Suffolk County, England. An ancestor, Robert Tuck, settled in New Hampshire in 1638 and made his living there as a tailor. After working a while in the middle eastern states, in 1851 Jeremiah came to California, leaving from New York via Panama. He arrived in San Francisco with \$2.00 in his pocket.

He became an express messenger in the gold country, carrying bags of gold over a dangerous route between the mining camps and the stage lines. He also served as a camp store clerk. He went into partnership with Eben Owen in the general merchandise business in Sacramento. Then he settled on a Spanish grant about two miles east of Vacaville, where he lived about four years. We know that he was there on May 8, 1859 since he wrote a letter to a relative from there on that date. Next he settled on the farm about two and one-half miles southeast of Batavia

on a quarter section, for farming. He later received a U.S. patent on the first quarter, then purchased an additional section. (The land was described as "barren, unfenced, open prairie, inhabited by coyotes, antelopes, wild horses.")

He returned to Paw Paw, Michigan in 1869 where he married Etta E. (Esther Elizabeth) Engle on August 21. They returned to California on the newly opened trans-continental railroad. Their children were:

Bertha, who died at nine (is buried in the Dixon Cemetery).

Frank, who studied at the University of Leipzig in Germany, and later taught and was principal of schools in California.

Leo, who got his law degree from the University of Michigan, and practiced law in San Francisco for the firm of Lane, White and Elliott for several years; then he returned to farm the Dixon ranch from about 1916 to 1961. He married Sarah B. Tuck in 1913. Sarah was born in Novally, Ireland, where she was a teacher before she came to San Francisco in 1907. Leo and Sarah's children, Mary Tuck Ostrander and Dallas Tuck, are now the owners of the ranch on Pitt School Road.

Jeremiah Tuck lived at the Dixon ranch from the 1860's until his death on June 2, 1901, with the exception of five years, 1888-1893, when the family lived in Napa, California, so Frank and Leo could attend Napa College.

Jay Tuck was one of the signers of the Constitution for the Binghamton Cemetery. His granddaughter, Mary, was in my class in Dixon High School. When the school put on James Barrie's "A Kiss for Cinderella", Mary was Cinderella and I was the prince. We both spoke at the graduation ceremonies in 1931.

— The End —

. . . . .

In a coming edition we will publish a history of the Dannenbergs.



## INSERT A

Binghamton Cemetery Union.  
Constitution.

Art. 1:- This organization shall be known in law as the "Binghamton Cemetery Union".

Art. 2- The particular business and objects of the Union shall be to procure a suitable tract of land and cause it to be appropriately laid out into lots, drive ways, walks, paths &c. for the burial of the dead.

To enclose, improve, ornament and embellish said tract of land, and to keep it in order as a pleasant, attractive and fitting place for the last repose of relatives and friends of the members.

And to render such aid and assistance as may be desirable, in procuring appropriate burial for strangers and others who may die in the vicinity.

Art. 3- Its business shall be managed by a Board of six Trustees.

Members.

Any person approving the objects of the Union, may become a member thereof by signing this Constitution, and thereby agreeing to purchase a lot in said Cemetery or to pay into the Treasury a sum not less than five Dollars.



# History of the Dixon Women's Improvement Club

Continued from Volume III of the Dixon Historical Society Publication

Researched and compiled by Grace O'Neill

August 1994

The last meeting had been June 1929 with a picnic at the driving park. The Club did not hold meetings during the summer, so this will continue with the first meeting of the new Club year.

**September 4, 1929:** Mrs. Madden reported that Mrs. Ida Brinkerhoff Forward had willed \$1,000 to Dixon for a Memorial Fountain in honor of her father and mother. The City had accepted the gift and decided to pay for the water and place it in the Park at the Club's approval. Unanimously accepted.



L to R - Eva Romani, Margaret Jacinto, Muriel Sievers, Irene Swasey

**May 1930:** Mrs. Kendrick requested pictures of homes and gardens or other interesting spots for a book of Dixon which she felt was needed. She would like all the town and country people to respond. It would become the property of the Club and she would exhibit it at the State Fair in September.

**June 3, 1930:** The annual Jinx of the Women's Improve-

ment Club was held at the High School Gym. A basket luncheon was served at one o'clock. Many of the ladies were in costume, and the entertainment was in the order of an indoor track meet between two teams, the Army and the Navy. Suitable prizes were awarded for the events. The meeting adjourned late in the afternoon bringing to a happy close the Club work for the year.

Standard Oil to terminate the lease of the lot for a service station on September 30.

**September 3, 1930:** Park committee for the year was Mrs. E.J. Timm, Mrs. E.D. Dudley, Mrs. J.L. Kilkenny. *(The following was told by Olin Timm at a Historical Society Board meeting in August 1994. Mrs. Kilkenny and Mrs. Timm had a difference of opinion as to the trimming of the trees in the Park. Mrs. Kilkenny contended that untrimmed they encouraged immoral behavior. Mrs. Timm did not want them to be trimmed. Once when Mrs. Timm had been gone for a time, she returned to find all of the trees had been trimmed by the city on the order of Mayor John Kilkenny.)*

**October 15, 1930:** Held the meeting on the lawn in the Park. Decided to try to rent the corner lot.

**January 7, 1931:** Social meeting for January 21, was cancelled owing to the burial services for Mrs. H. Thomson. No longer insure the piano. Mrs. Brier asked for the use of the Club room for vocal lessons. Owing to disturbing influences on the library previous requests had been denied, so this could not be granted.

**February 17, 1932:** The Auxiliary presented a tree to the Club for the Park, the ceremony to take place Mon-





L to R - Irene Swasey, unidentified, Joanne Jacobs, Bette Clancy, Betty Gibbs, Mary Keener, Mary Hunt, Barbara Schutze, Muriel Morris, Marie Dutra, Georgene McCarthy, Bonnie Buhfent, Roberta Barker, Dorothy Barry, Loretta Fletcher (current president). In back - Donna Simes



day afternoon at 4:00. The Club voted to accept the tree ... the location of which would be decided by Mrs. Timm.

**February 24, 1932:** Special meeting. 29 members in attendance. Mrs. Bell made the motion, seconded by Mrs. Dunncliff, that the Park be transferred to the town with certain reservations. Motion carried. So many women had been inspired by the undertaking of the park project that the membership swelled. Even with added forces, it had been difficult to raise the more than a thousand dollars a year in order to meet all the obligations...upkeep, taxes, water bills, and hiring of a caretaker.

At this point members of the Town Board suggested that the Club turn the Park over to the town and so free itself of the financial obligations. The town, via Mayor Kilkenny, asked for no rights. They were merely interested in relieving the women of the burden. Much debate pro and con followed. They discussed putting all the lots under one deed. There was some fear that the Park might not always be maintained as such. After the town had accepted a clause in the deed that no changes would be made in the Park without the consent of the Club, the transfer was made. Years later when it became apparent that the library should be enlarged, the Women's Club authorized a committee to go to the Town Board and to the Library Board and tell them they had permission to make the extension of the library building (1958), and again in 1989. The combination of library and park is a very attractive feature of our town. At the plaque dedication ceremony, in 1992, David Schulze gave a short talk on Mrs. Schulze. David and his brother, Robert, are great-grandsons of both Mrs. Schulze and Mrs. Currey.

**March 2, 1932:** Sold the fence for \$10 on the Standard Oil lot and proceeded to clean up the lot and landscape it. The plans called for a rose garden.

**December 1932:** The tap dancing class of girls put on a very pleasing number. The girls were the Misses:

Marion Madden	Virginia Almeida
Annabelle Brown	Marjorie Madden
Barbara McKenzie	Barbara McIntyre
Betty Mae Carpenter	Dorothy Dawson

**January 18, 1933:** Mrs. Timm reported that the work of finishing the northwest corner of the Park would soon be completed...Added more cupboards to the kitchen.

**February 1933:** Elda Rohwer urged all the women to learn the first and last verses of the Star Spangled Banner...4-H children donated shrubs for the northwest corner of the Park. It was voted to move slowly on finishing the Park because of the depression.

**September 1933:** Mrs. Ray Rohwer appointed to have the piano tuned... Voted to confer with the Aid Societies of the United Church, Methodist and Catholic Churches to arrange for the annual teachers' reception in the High School Auditorium, the 20th.

**February 7, 1934:** On account of an automobile accident to our President, Mrs. Mary E. Bell, and the death of her dear husband, Dr. Chas. Bell, no meeting was held. Members bowed their heads in silent prayer and dispersed.



Scholarship Recipient Carol Holder  
L to R - Mother Rita Holder, Carol Holder, Georgana  
McCarthy, Scholarship Committee Chairman

**March 7, 1934:** Mrs. Timm asked if the ladies would like some real cannons in their Park. (Civil War) Did not meet with approval. A boys' band is being organized and would the Club approve the placing of a band stand in the Park for future concerts? Needed more information. Mrs. Timm also presented the idea of meeting only once a month and Article 4 Section I of the Club's Constitution was appropriately changed by vote. The meetings to be the third Wednesday of every month and so it is to this day... The Native Daughters asked permission to use the park for an Easter Party. Granted... Contributed regularly to the Boys Band and to the Campfire Girls... Started collecting money for the Building fund. Hans Rohwer gave



the lowest bid for a sprinkler system in the corner lot.

Concurred with doing away with any signs or advertising along the highways to mar the beautiful scenery enjoyed by motorists touring the State of California. September 19, 1934: There was quite a discussion on our piano being "lent" out. It was moved, seconded and carried that the piano was not to leave the club rooms except for our own use.

#### **November 7, 1934:**

Discussed renovating the Club rooms. The library trustees planned to renovate the entire library. Decided to charge janitorial services to outsiders who used the Club rooms because they were left untidy. Met at the Legion Hall for several times during renovation of the library.

#### **January 16, 1935:**

Mrs. Dickie reported on the condition of the Club room and stated that the piano tuner advised moving the piano from such a damp room, so they moved it to another basement room. (In 1965, the piano was sold to the Methodist Church for \$100 and is currently in the sanctuary there. It is used regularly and still looks and sounds good.)

**March 30, 1935:** Thanked the Library Board for the Club room renovation, and moved back in for the meetings.

**November 1938:** Passed a resolution to Congress and the President to keep us out of war. Gave silver teas to buy books for the library.

**February 15, 1939:** Voted to sponsor a well-baby clinic. Mrs. Ann Trezvant was the nurse.

The Rotary Club gave the Improvement Club a request for Rio Vista to use girls from the high school in bathing suits, etc., for queen entrants for the Derby. The Improvement Club said this was not appropriate.

It would be difficult to enumerate all the activities in which the Club has shared and in some cases set in motion. Before World War I, Dixon supported, for several years, a good Chautauqua program to the extent of \$200 per year. Some of the events of import after the High School gymnasium was built were the community dinners for several hundred people in inadequate facilities. (Not the Community Council luncheons).

The Boys band sponsored by the Club provided

a nudge which led to the adoption of a music course in the school. For years and years they presented Christmas boxes to the old people in the County Hospital and members worked on the County Well Baby Clinic, with Roberta Barker and Dorothy Barry working almost the entire life of the clinic. (circa 1941-1980's) Barbara Schulze was



Committee (L to R) Lorene Elf, Betty Gibbs, Mary Hunt, Grace O'Neill. Absent, Greta Thomsen

also a long-time volunteer for the Clinic.

Another nudge was given to the installation of street signs. The Club donated \$200 and the Explorer and Troop 72 of the Boy Scouts installed them in two days' time.

On national holidays our flag appears in our business district. The American Legion takes care of them now, but it was the Women's Club which first got the merchants to adopt the flag display.

The building fund was unable to compete with increasing costs and has been resting in a CD account, lo, these many years. However, the interest has been used since 1972, to present a college scholarship annually, to an outstanding student.

American Homes Chairman Mrs. Ben Wynne reported a home is never complete without a garden, and told a Spanish legend which says that when God created the world all the little angels crowded on a rainbow to look. Suddenly the overburdened rainbow broke into



millions of pieces and scattered over the world and that started the gardens.

Mrs. Wilbur Evans, Program chairman, presented Mrs. Patrick McCarthy, who was accompanist for the Misses Cathy Coleman, Kay Bradley, Myrna Martin and Mary Mace who delighted the ladies with their singing of "Hearts of Stone," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," and "Glendy Burk."

Alta Wynne reported on the Safety Committee appealing for clean roadsides and safer driving. She added she had read recently that "A RECKLESS MOTORIST IS A MAN OF EXTINCTION." On November 15, 1951 she reported that the first auto accident occurred in 1896, and they have been steadily increasing to the present enormous figures.

Americanization committee chairman Mrs. Wrigley read the correct placement of the flag. When on a level, the flag is placed on the right. When on a raised platform, on the left.

**February 1943:** Mrs. J. Rohwer, as American Homes Chairman, said that as the American home is part of the "home front," the housewife must do her part in saving items for the war effort (World War II), spend the family money wisely, prepare nutritious meals, and learn the short cuts of homemaking, so that her time may be used wisely in outside activities. The whole family must cooperate and each do their share in the home.

**February 1946:** The Music Scholarship chairman presented last year's candidate, Miss Marie Gnos, who sang "My Mother Bids Me Bind My Hair," "Were My Songs With Wings Provided," and "Stars Brightly Shining." Marie, of Swiss extraction, yodeled for an encore.

The Improvement Club won for its float and its garden at the May Fair for many, many years. Also, for their table settings. There are many blue and purple ribbons in our trunk as a reminder of how pretty the gardens were.

**February 2, 1948:** Mrs. Robert McKenzie presented a program of local talent: a discussion and demonstration of ceramics by Mrs. Marjorie Kloster, on leather tooling by Mrs. Simmie, and an art exhibit showing pictures by

Rev. D.K. Clark and Vincent Rossi.

**February 1949:** Last year's music scholarship winner was Dean Stark, now attending the College of the Pacific, who gave the musical program with several solos.

**October 1952:** Mrs. Linford Anderson presented the names of Mesdames Olin Timm, Frank Dyer, Charles Everett, Matt Osborn, Edgar Everett and Warren Dutton as new members. Speaker today on Drugs. The speaker told of the effect of drugs and how addicts are treated in hospitals, only one in ten being really cured. How can we battle this appalling thing that is threatening our young people? Education, know where the children are and who they are with, encourage 4-H, hobbies, and scouting—keep children busy and happy.

**November 1952:** Book Section reviewed two books. Reviewers were Mrs. Victor Paradis and Mrs. Cole Whealey.

**November 1953:** Mrs. E.W. Sinclair, president, reported WIC had held two meetings with interesting speakers, had sent cookies to Travis, held a card party, sent \$60 to the school milk fund. They also sent \$60 to the Hospital for the Blind and are continuing with the monthly well baby clinic. They donated \$500 for ditty bags for the service men (Korean conflict) and worked in the blood donor service.

**1953:** Speakers from Holland tell members how to grow tulips and an expert from China tells the club that the Communists are existing on the basis of fear.

**December 1953:** Program at the gala Christmas party was presented by Mrs. Lawrence Stoeven. The Dixon High glee club under the leadership of William Hodge, with Miss Shirley Parkhurst at the piano, rendered several selections. With Peter Timm as master of ceremonies and Mrs. Phil McMills in charge, pupils of the Curry Dance studio presented several numbers. All were in attractive costumes. Sandra Wayne, Judy Sutherland, Roberta McMills, Diane Southard, Myra Pardi, and Sandra Southwell gave a military dance. The Hungarian dance was given by Michael Hull, Peter Timm and "Butch" Azevedo. Joyce Fanning and Jackie and Billy Crooks danced the Clog Waltz. An acrobatic number was given by Sandra Wayne. And "Butch" Azevedo concluded the



program by giving a Russian dance. Presiding at the tea table were Mrs. George Wrigley and Mrs. Ralph Moss. Guests welcomed by the Club were Mesdames Willard Bulkley, Vaughn Burlingham, and L. R. Stoeven, Jr., of Woodland.

**1954:** Liberty Island ladies held many parties for Club benefit.. complete with door prizes .. one door prize, a turkey, was won by Mrs. Victor Paradis. Hostesses were Mesdames Tony Giannoni, Guido Romani, Fred Rehrmann, Marino Romani, Henry Rehrmann, and W.H. Jarrett. Another party was a gift wrapping party for the County Hospital.

**January 1955:** To swell their charity fund, members of the Women's Improvement Club will sponsor a progressive dessert-bridge party Monday evening on the west side of town. Included in the itinerary are the residences of Mesdames Homer Brown, William McDonald, George Barry, Harry Petersen, and H.G. Stoeven. Dessert will be served at 7:30 and bridge will begin at eight o'clock. A number of these successful money makers were held.

The women promoted legislation for mental health in 1955.

The club has had as their special guests Dixon business women, Dixon women mayors, Dixon women retired teachers, and other women of distinction from the Dixon community.

**February 1958:** Other programs, Alan Anderson gave Lincoln's Gettysburg address and the Preamble to the Constitution. Elinor Olson spoke of her five months in Switzerland as International Farm Youth Exchange.

**December 6, 1962:** Since its beginnings, the Club has produced some very up-town theater. One such program for Escort Night was at the Legion Hall: Decorations - a cafe scene in the hall as well as on the stage by Mrs. Gordon Sork and Jake Dietrich. Above the stage was a sign "Club Mauderne" honoring Mrs. Maude Dawson, producer and program chairman. After the potluck supper, "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans, Revue of 1922" was presented. The cast included: "Famous Four," Jan Buhlert, Tom Burton, Harry Goodmanson, and Larry Sherwood. "Wait Until the

Sun Shines," Harold Axelson, Charles Hughes, Neal Olson and Freeman Smith. "Put Your Arms Around Me," by Misses Avis Cardoza and Pauline Murray, and Mesdames Harvey Jacobs and Robert Russell. "St. Louis Blues," Marime McKinney. "Summer Time," Miss Mary McGreal. Piano solo, Dick Rattenbury with orchestra, "My Man," Mrs. Herman Pistor to Dick Rattenbury. Apache dance, Miss Marime McKinney and Dick Rattenbury. "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend," Mrs. John Sievers as Diamond Jim Brady and Mrs. Ray Rohwer as Lillian Russell. Three old maids from Elmira, Mesdames George Farrell, James Griggs, and Frank Price. "I'm a Ding Dong Daddy from Dumas," Mrs. Jess Jones and William Schmidt (hayseeds). Can Can Girls dance, Mesdames Ross Hanna, Herman Pistor, and William Whipple. Close of program song by orchestra and cast, "Way Down Yonder."

This was but one of the enormous productions put on by Maude Dawson. One year it was "A Spanish Siesta," another time it was "Come Back to Erin." Each time the food and decor was in theme. After each entertainment she served dinner for the cast in the same theme as the production.. Irish stew for "Come Back to Erin," etc.

Other producers of great entertainment were Josie Eggert, Elda Rohwer and Muriel Sievers.

In 1967, the Red Cross asked us to furnish nylon Christmas bags for men stationed in Vietnam. Emily Ericksen made all the bags and Grace Davidson, Gretchen and Hazel Higgins and Joy Wrigley helped fill them. They were still making ditty bags in 1969.

The Chamber of Commerce under the presidency of Robert Russell asked the Improvement Club to join them in planning the course of direction of the City, which invitation the women received ecstatically.

In 1981, our scarecrow won first place at the May Fair. At a garden luncheon at Man-Mar ranch Ann Rossi told about her trip to New Zealand.

In April 1986, we donated toward a permanent picture collection in the library.

In 1990, Charlene Sylvestri entertained the club



in her garden and everyone participated in "printing" a picture which Char touched up and named "The Park." It is currently on display in the library.

We have supported nearly every entity of this community.

For the City, with the aid of the high school shop students we have built tables, benches, barbecues, furnished playground equipment for Hall Park, instigated and contributed to lighting for the now defunct tennis courts, contributed to the Rotary Club's project of building the par exercise course at C.A. Jacobs school park, paid for lights to be installed in the Improvement Club Park. (PGE installed them). We contributed a wheel chair to the Health Center, benches for the downtown, a television set for the Senior Center, etc.

We contributed to the purchase of Primo the Dog, for the police department, and continued with monthly maintenance payments until we learned of his demise.

Chamber of Commerce: For the last four years we have helped at the Christmas Tree lighting program by serving cookies to Holiday revelers at the ceremony as well as staffing the Toys for Tots and Canned tree barrels. In 1992, a Christmas tree was purchased by the Club and planted in the Park for the annual tree lighting ceremony. It replaced a larger one that had died.

The club president assists in the annual "Citizen of the Year" selection, and a committee has judged the Home Decoration contest since 1992.

Library: Our affair with the Library has been ongoing.

We have furnished refreshments for the children's Christmas programs, and for the dedication of the new library addition. Our members work as volunteers in the library on a regular basis. Barbara Schulze has been a volunteer in the archive department for several years. Since we landscaped the Carnegie entrance on B Street and renovated the steps, a library volunteer maintains the flower garden. We also gave \$600 for a typewriter for

Jeanne Uhrquart of the Archives.

Margaret Jacinto presented a picture she had painted of the Peters house that had stood on the City Hall spot for so many years, to the City of Dixon at the dedication of the City Hall, in 1982. Even today we are working to insure that the proposed railroad undercrossing does not infringe on the Park's beauty and usefulness.

We still have escort night, the card party, the Christmas tea and periodically, a trip or two. Emma Jane Timm was a member from the Club's inception until about 1970.

These are some of the things which have concerned the Dixon Women's Improvement Club, proof that its members have had the welfare of the community at heart, and have responded whenever a need has been seen. In addition to these things which can be seen and counted there has been another contribution, an intangible something which is essential to good living. Work-

ing and playing together, we women have learned to know and appreciate what can be accomplished by group determination and dedication. Strangers have been welcomed and brought into touch with those interested in good community life. The aim of the Dixon Women's Improvement Club is to better material con-

ditions which can be seen but, also, to develop that unseen quality which is a live community spirit.

Though the Dixon Women's Improvement Club is still in existence after 90 years, its membership has grown older. The advent of working women has created changes for clubs that meet in the afternoons. Soroptimists have taken over many of the areas of community concern and the money making projects formerly covered by the Improvement Club, but the Improvement Club continues to work for the benefit of the community and it will forever leave "footprints on the sands of time."



L to R - Georgiana Mc Carthy, Virginia Carpenter, Mae Shigeki, Eva Romani, Emma Rehrmann



# DIXON HISTORY



Dixon Train Station

## VOLUME 5 • SPRING 1996

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*Journal of The Dixon Historical Society*



## "Denton Barker"

Interviewed by Dennis Triste

December 7, 1980

**Interviewer:** Today is Sunday, December 7, 1980. I am Dennis Triste, director of the Dixon Public Library Oral History Project. And being interviewed today is Mr. Denton Barker of Dixon. Mr. Barker was born in Grass Valley, California on March 27, 1908. He came to Dixon in 1929 and describes himself as a retail merchant. Mr. Barker, you described yourself as a newcomer to Dixon but are quick to point out that your mother was born here in 1873. How did your family come to this town?

**Denton Barker:** Well, that's a long story. It goes back to 1850. The two brothers had disposed of their property in Ohio. They were in Missouri on the way to California and one of the Madden brothers was going to go around the cape and come into California that way. My great-grandfather said, "No, we're going to California overland." My great-grandmother didn't want to go that way on account of the hazards. He'd already had his passage made overland, and he said, "We'll be there and get out gold and be back before they get to California." He took three of the children with him and gave all the money that he had to my great-grandmother and he left. And eventually they got to California. In order to get a grub stake to go on his venture to find gold he put two of the children, my grandmother and my great-uncle John, in bondage. And then, at a later date, my grandfather came out from England and took the two children out of bondage and married my grandmother. In about 10 years they contacted the Madden family in Dixon. They hadn't had any luck in finding gold so they moved down here. At that time...the railroad had gone through and they were moving Silveyville into what is now Dixon. The family moved to the northwest corner of Mayes and First Street. They lived here for several years; the gold bug bit them again and they went back to Grass Valley. That aspect of looking for gold or quick riches was world-wide and my grandfather, being a young man in England at the time, wanted to be on his own, so he came to California.

**I:** So, your grandfather was from England and met your grandmother whose family had moved out from Ohio. He was a Madden?

**D:** No, he was a Williams.

**I:** Then your grandmother was a Madden.

**D:** Yes, a Madden.

**I:** You mention that some children were put in a position of bondage. That's also an interesting concept.

**D:** Bondage, that was my grandmother when she was about twelve years of age. Of course, that's the only way. There weren't banks or things where you could transfer money or borrow money, and when he left Missouri where they were waiting for the overland trip, ...he had his mind made up and he wasn't going to change it. He'd already paid the passage for the Overland route to the wagon master and he gave the money that he had left to my great-grandmother and the older children. They came out to California and, of course, not having any finances, he did something that at the time was a practice. A family paid him, I think it was \$350.00, for each one of the two children. At any time he got that \$350.00 or \$700.00 he could take them out of bondage. While they were in bondage they did housework and other things that that family wanted them to do. In the case of my great-uncle John, he took care of the stables. I think it was an Overland Stage Depot because at the age of seventeen he was driving a stage coach from French Corral to North San Juan, and then the return trip. The thing that got me, at seventeen, here's my uncle driving this four-horse stage coach up those mountain roads, and believe me they were steep and crooked.

**I:** Do you remember life in the gold fields? How long did you live there?

**D:** Oh, I lived in Grass Valley until I was 19 years of age.

**I:** I don't know how long the gold rush fever and all that lasted but did you witness any of that sort of activity?

**D:** Oh, definitely. Definitely. Matter of fact, for a short time I, as a young kid, worked in the Idaho/Maryland