DIXON HISTORY

Dixon Train Station

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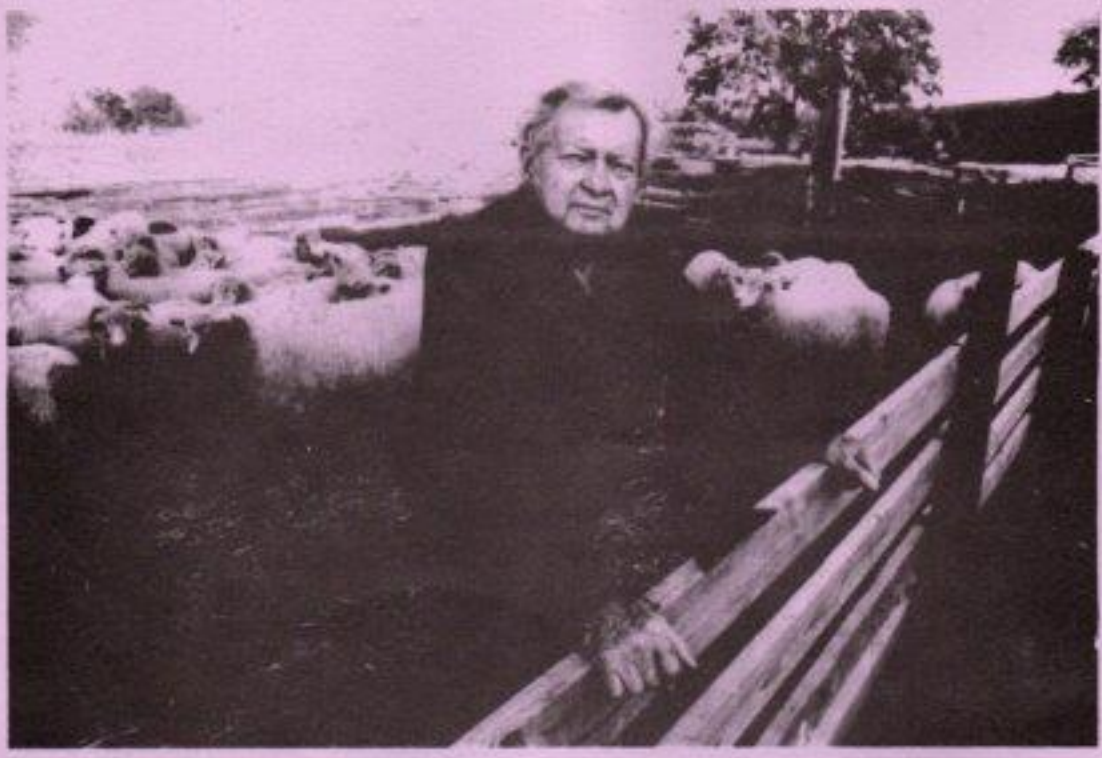
Journal of The Dixon Historical Society



OLIN HENRY TIMM

April 24, 1913 - May 21, 1997

Olin Timm served as President of the Dixon Historical Society from March 1988 until his death on May 21, 1997.

He was instrumental in starting the printing of DIXON HISTORY. He taped the oral programs presented at our meetings and had them transcribed for written production.

It would be fitting to have a program documenting his many activities for publication in a future issue of DIXON HISTORY. Meanwhile, this issue is dedicated to his memory.

DIXON HISTORY
SPRING 1998

With this issue the Dixon Historical Society publishes its sixth volume of Dixon History. The material comes from the members' presentations at our quarterly meetings and their individual writings. We hope that the re-telling of the events and anecdotes in this booklet will serve to stimulate perhaps forgotten memories in the minds of our readers.

Again, Marion Phillips and Kathryn Orrell should be acknowledged with much appreciation for their proofreading of the manuscripts.

For information regarding membership in the Dixon Historical Society, or if you have questions or comments, please write to:

The Dixon Historical Society
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The Dixon Electric Train

by Kathryn Orrell

The operating principle of the electric railroad is almost identical to the operating principle of the electric elevator. One Frank Julian Sprague, an associate of Thomas Edison, invented both the electric elevator and the electric railway. In simplest description, the electric elevator has a motor in the basement of a building or house, and above it, on each floor are wires built in a vertical fashion which carry the electric impulse from the basement motor to each floor. Buttons are installed in the elevator car which can transmit the impulse that moves the elevator car either upward or downward. Frank Julian Sprague took this same idea and applied it on the horizontal. Instead of having a motor in a basement, he installed a motor in a little station house. Each car on the railway had an attachment to this motor which would cause the train to move.

The original electric trains were called "trolleys" because they had long poles that extended upward from the car and attached to an overhead electric wire. Later trains had a third rail which carried the electricity. These third electrified rails, however, were very dangerous, and were also attractive to children attempting, in their games, to jump across the third rail in an attempt to "show off" to their peers. Many children were seriously injured in doing so. An amusing, but also sad, story originated in Marin County concerning a bull who had broken out of his pen and had charged down the railroad track. For some unknown reason, he was attracted to the third rail and repeatedly charged it. Each time he would be thrown down. But he would get up and charge again until he was finally killed. The train which eventually came through Dixon, however, was an overhead trolley, and did not incorporate the third rail.

The first electric trains in California were in Marin County, and became very popular tourist attractions. The motors were strong enough to pull the trains up the hills of Mount Tamalpais, and, hopefully, the brakes were strong enough to hold the train going down hill. The first electric train near the Central Valley ran down the eastern side of the Sierras; then later, enough people got together to build a railroad on the west side of the Sierras. This western train ran from Chico down into the Bay Area which would then have to cross the Bay on a ferry, the overall purpose being to get into San Francisco. A famous ferry, the Ramon Ferry, was able to carry six cars at a time across the water. The cars would then unload, get onto tracks, and thence into San Francisco. By this time, therefore, there were three routes operating in Northern California: the one which ran up and down the coast from San Francisco to Marin County, the one on the eastern side of the Sierras, and the third route on the Western side of the mountains from Chico to San Francisco. This third route is the one which eventually came through Dixon, thence to the Ramon Ferry and San Francisco.

To repeat, our train was an overhead trolley, and therefore, did not have many serious accidents associated with it. This particular train was called the Sacramento Northern. It followed about an 185 mile run from Chico to San Francisco, and this run was one of the longest in the entire United States at that time. The Sacramento Northern was a consolidation of two other long and separate types of lines. One of the lines included Woodland and Vacaville and was originally called the Northern Electric.

In 1906, the Interurban was completed all the way to Oroville, and by December, it had established service south to Marysville. On September 7, 1907, through service was established to Sacramento. This system still did not include Dixon. The portion of the system between Oakland and Sacramento was called the Oakland and Antioch, later renamed Oakland, Antioch & Eastern, or O.A. & E. Dixon doesn't come into the picture until about 1913. By this date, approximately one thousand people lived in Dixon, and the men promoting the building into Dixon considered it to be a profitable enterprise. There is some argument about this 1913 date. But it is pretty sure that service was well established by 1915, because Mr. Petersen here in town paid the fares for some Dixon children to go on the excursion into San Francisco to attend the 1915 Fair. The train carrying the children did depart from Dixon. However, other dates I encountered concerning the first arrival in Dixon were 1914 and 1917. So, members of you who have memories or other information can accept or discard as you wish.

There is also disagreement about the route of the tracks themselves. Original debate involved routing the tracks down First Street vs. Jackson St. Others, particularly officials who owned the train, preferred that it be routed down present-day Adams Street. Also, discussion involved how to get across the Southern Pacific tracks - build underpasses or overpasses.

Another point of contention was the location of the station house. Some remember it as being located near the present Post Office. Regardless of these disagreements, we do have information about the actual festivities of the day the train did officially enter Dixon - which one source states was October 16, 1913 - and was officially the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern.

One Melville Dozier, not a Dixonite, was very instrumental in getting the train to route through Dixon. Mr. Dozier estimated that he would be able to build the entire first unit for $30,000, which was less than the estimates of the State Railway Commission. Stock was sold after a vigorous campaign was launched to obtain investors. The railroad was not considered to be a State railroad, rather to be a "people built" railroad because of the stock investors. Electricity for the cars was furnished by the Great Western Power Company, the "juice" coming down from the big plant up in the Feather River Canyon.

Not everybody in Dixon and surrounding areas was in favor of the routing of the tracks. There was a story of a farmer who vehemently protested that the railroad was not going through his farm - absolutely! One particular day on which he was absent from his farm, his wife stood out with a shotgun and shot at everybody trying to route the railroad through her property. Whether or not she succeeded in stopping the construction, I did not discover.

October 16, 1913 was a day of celebration. Each town on the route had its own celebration. Newspaper articles state the "Dairy City" (as Dixon was then known) attracted many visitors to enjoy our celebration. Sixteen hundred people were served barbecue - some six hundred more than the actual Dixon population. Barbecue pits were set up close to the station, and lunch was served in the driveway of the West Valley lumber shed. A.F. Beckley organized the people so that food could be served swiftly and efficiently. An entrance for only one person at a time was set up on the west side of the driveway, and as each passed along the "food route", his plate was filled with portions of beef, lamb and other goodies. The barbeque committee consisted of Beckley, A.B. Parker and W.T. Dawson. Assisting these three were the ladies: Mrs. R.D. Mayes, Mrs. Walter Baker, Mrs. S.G. Wilson, Mrs. G.E. Maceroy, Mrs. Nagel and Mrs. King. Included also were Mrs. W.H. Gerlach, Mrs. J.C. Grove, Mrs. H. C. Grove, Mrs. S.S. Silvey, Mrs. G.S. Johnson, Mrs. F.G. Dunnicliff, Mrs. C.L. Apperson, Mrs. A.B. Parker, Mrs. H. Fisher, Mrs. L.A. Morris, Mrs. G. Steinmiller, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Parkhurst, Mrs. Runge and Mrs. Newby.

The expenses were $222.00 and donations came within $5.00 of this amount. The largest donation, $50.00, was given by the Chamber of Commerce. The following people donated sheep to the barbecue: H.L. Bissell, A.B. Parker, J. Kilkenny, P.M. Allen, G.W. Morris, J.R. Bloom, J. B. Thompson, J. S. Hill, J. H. Petersen (the one who paid the fares of the children attending the 1915 San Francisco Fair) W.B. Petersen, and J.W. Marshall. Cakes were contributed by the aforementioned ladies, and cash moneys were paid by other individuals. The main expenses were $75.00 for a steer and $25.00 for the barbecue chef.

Following the lunch at eleven a.m., the official "first excursion" started. Three spacious cars were loaded with 300 passengers, including the officers of the railroad and a band under the leadership of Julius Weyand.

At the end of the "first day festivities" a concert and a dance were held - this day happened to be the last Saturday night of the concert season - a fitting and happy ending to a "big day" in the history of Dixon.

Here are some "firsts" which took place after regular service was established:

1) Leland Hyde was the first to buy a round trip ticket to San Francisco.

2) J.D. Johnson and Son received the first freight over the new line.

3) The Dixon Milling Company shipped the first carload of alfalfa meal over the new line.

4) G.W. Foster, 84 years old, was the oldest man to make the trip on the train.

5) Mrs. Valara Haria was the first woman to get on the first train outward bound.

The timetables of the Sacramento Valley Electric were: Westbound at 7:40 a.m., 9:20 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:35 p.m., 3:00 p.m., 5:35 p.m., and 7:32 p.m.

On Sundays only, the train would leave San Francisco at 8 o'clock p.m. and would arrive in Dixon at 11:05 p.m.

In 1920, the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern went into receivership and became known as the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad, later the Sacramento Short Line. By 1927, after these many changes, the line was known as the Western Pacific. However, the owners of the electric train which serviced Dixon (the O.A.&E.) according to statistics, did not consider Dixon profitable and service was therefore discontinued in August 1917.

The Sacramento Northern's first electric train arriving in Dixon in 1913. The garage is that of the Dixon Auto Service Company, and the depot sign reads: "Sacramento Valley Electric," "Waiting Room."

THE DIXON FIRE DEPARTMENT

As reported at the Dixon Historical Society meeting on October 1, 1989
by Rick Dorris

A lot of this material has been complied by one of our volunteers, Pat Benefield, who has a lot of documents and has taken some time to go through them. With history, the longer you wait before somebody writes it down the more the stories get changed 'til there's four or five different versions. What I have today are some notes. Also, there is a small verbal document by Elbert Holly on the history of Dixon that was transcribed and it has a small section on the Fire Department.

Any western city in the United States was leveled by fire at one time or another. The gold rush is really what brought the people here. Wooden towns grew up real fast. San Francisco was a wooden town until it burned down about the seventh time and somebody figured "maybe we oughta use bricks," which they did. A lot of those buildings are still there today.

I'm not originally from Dixon but West Sacramento I've lived here since 1977. I've always been attracted to Dixon. I wanted to move here before I did.

The Fire Department here, according to the best recollection we have, started with the bucket brigade in 1876. The Chief was the Postmaster and Constable at the time, B.F. Newby. As typical of those days, one or two fires a year were the major things to deal with. When the railroad come through, locomotives had steam engines. The first thing they do is throw "clinkers" everywhere. It was a cinder bed with lots of fires. When I grew up, I saw the last of the steam engines going out and the Diesel engines were coming in. We lived right where the S.P. tracks crossed the Sacramento River in Sacramento.

In 1877, Dixon was having a lot of fires due to steam engines, so a fire company was organized, of volunteers. It consisted of storing water barrels in strategic places around town, keeping buckets with them, and being ready for a fire. That was very common practice in a lot of towns. Ever notice how fire buckets are round on the bottom? That's so they can't be used for anything else. The town painter can't take it off the wall and use it to put paint in; you can't set it down; you can't use it for a mop bucket; it's a FIRE bucket!

The original members were Jay Fredrickson, William VanSant, H. Eppinger and Owen O'Neil. The water to fill the buckets came from the horse troughs and the hand pumps at the troughs. The company started to grow and in 1879 it became a little better equipped. The firemen began holding civic-type functions to raise money to buy equipment: dances, subscriptions for fire protections. In those days, everybody paid a dollar a year. The money they had then was used to buy a Babcock engine, which was a hand pump and hook- and -ladder truck. The hook-and-ladder truck is the one thing that has intrigued me the most because we had a hard time finding anybody that really has anything other than a general description of it. Benicia had probably the oldest fire department in Solano County and Dixon's was the next oldest.

In order to encourage volunteers in 1880, firemen became exempt from poll taxes and jury duty and anything else, and that would encourage men to become volunteer firemen. At that time the department grew to 40 men. They paid an average of 25¢ a month for dues. If you failed to show up at the fire you had to pay 50¢. Real incentive!

In 1879, Dixon's first big fire was reported at the home of William B. McKinley. The fire equipment then was scattered around and the firemen would be summoned by the bell that still sits out at the fairgrounds today. They would pick up the fire equipment and go to the fire.

In 1883, there was Dixon's first major fire. On Monday, November 6, 1883, at 6:30 p.m., north winds were really blowing. Fire was discovered in the Pearson House (which was where the old Farmer's Exchange was located). The rooming house was of wood frame construction, typical of the time. Before the fire department could get into action, the house was totally engulfed in flames. The heat was so intense that the firemen on the roof of the Union Hall were driven off. The Central Pacific Railroad Depot began to burn, along with the warehouse located next door. All efforts were then directed at saving the contents of the homes and stores along Main Street. The stores kept kegs of powder that blew up from the intense heat, thus further spreading the fire. Ranchers from around town came to assist in the fire fighting. The Bank of Dixon and Eppinger's store on the north side of B Street, being made of brick, stopped the spread of flames. The buildings at that time that were built of brick helped to slow the spread of fire. Where there were wooden buildings, the fire just continued to move. North of the Bank of Dixon, a livery stable was saved and King's Hotel was destroyed when the winds swept through the building. They didn't have much time to save much of the contents.

Looting and mobs began to take over. In less than an hour, almost every building downtown was leveled. Buildings that were saved were the Post Office, VanSant's store, Einstein's store, a dentist's office, and the Palace Hotel--all located on the east side of Main Street. Essentially, everything on the west side of North First was leveled. The Baptist Church roof caught fire but was saved, and embers

started a fire on the Petersen Ranch located seven miles south of town. (It was more like two. J.R. Bloom and Henry Petersen got fires. They both had property south of town, Bloom just behind the fairgrounds and Petersen across on the west side.--Ardeth Riedel)

In those days, the practice was to telegraph for help to different cities. Central Pacific crews would bring in fire equipment. It was very common in those days for cities as far away as San Francisco and Sacramento to come in and help on fires because they had the big steam pumping engines and the older, bigger fire departments. It was very common to load pumps up on flat-bed cars and bring them in. It would take several hours, but it would take several hours for a town to burn down. You take what you can get!

In 1884, reconstruction started. That's when the majority of the brick buildings came about. Brick buildings were at the time considered "fire proof." Metal fire shutters were part of the building code back then. If we look at the back of the Masonic Lodge and behind Farmer's Exchange, we can still see that construction today. During this rebuilding of Dixon, John Pritchard built a metal firehouse on Jackson Street, north of A Street. This was the house with the hook-and-ladder and the Babcock engine, and sat exactly where this building stands today. We've been on this site for almost a hundred years.

In 1885, a freight train engineer and conductor were arrested because their train blocked the tracks. I wish we could do that today. In 1887, the fire company modernized and bought a second hand-operated pump, which they installed on a water wagon. This was Dixon's first tanker. The standard dress for firemen in those days was red flannel shirts.

In 1889, Mel Parker's house caught fire and involved an outhouse and a woodshed. Probably the biggest boon to the fire department was the installation of a steam water pumping plant and fire hydrants in the city - in 1890. Water mains six inches in diameter were up and down the few main streets. There were 5600 feet of mains installed, 13 fire hydrants, and two 50,000 gallon water tanks, which were quite a boost. As was typical of the era, as soon as one city experienced that one major fire, as I mentioned, just about every city did; then the fire department was organized. And it has continued to grow since then. That's the organized history that we have so far.

According to the information dictated by Elbert Holly, Peter Timm, in 1880, decided the town needed a fire department. They organized and bought an old bell from a ship called "Aculeo"*, and some of the original equipment goes back to the buckets that were purchased and the steam engine. The hand pumps were bought from the San Francisco fire department. Equipment was scattered around town and had the hand drawn trucks. Then it goes on into more of the modern era, but from the little bit here, we've been able to get some history that shows that the information we are getting is pretty consistent. What we're trying to look for now is history that pertains to the era from 1910 to the 1930's. We really seem to have a big gap during that time. We have a lot of vague recollections, but no specifics.

One of our engines is our 1921 LeFrance, and we still have that engine today. We were hoping to have it here but we are a little short on space and very limited on drivers who can drive it. We've been teaching a few, but just so we can preserve that piece, we really limit who can drive it. Right now, all it needs is a paint job. Operationally, it's in perfect shape. It's been kept up. We're trying to raise some funds right now to get it painted. We have access through C.M.F. in Vacaville. They have an antique vehicle restoring shop and as soon as we can raise a couple of thousand dollars we'd like to send it over there and have them totally strip it down and repaint and reletter it. It might take a year. The paint job on it right now is not original. As best as we can find out, somewhere around the late thirties or early forties it was hauled into somebody's barn and just shot one color red and the original paint is still under it, but the original paint jobs in those days had a very ornate type of quality. It was very common to have a mural, not just the name but an actual mural, something to do with the city, painted on the hood. So we want to get it back to that quality. Some of the engines of that era that we've looked at had 13 to 20 coats of hand-rubbed lacquer on them as a standard paint job. There's a lot of nickel plating that's been painted over, and we want to completely strip it down, put the bare wood back on where it was, and totally get it back to its original condition and try to locate some of the original equipment that was on it.

When I first took over as fire chief in 1989 I was cleaning out some old files and I came across the bill of sale, the operator's manual and the delivery receipt. We bought that La France for $2,600.00. It pumps as well as it did the day we bought it. We don't want to wear it down but we like to take it out once a week to put some miles on it, keep it exercised so it runs. We find the more we run it the better it runs, but we're trying to limit how much we use it.

* *See page 8*

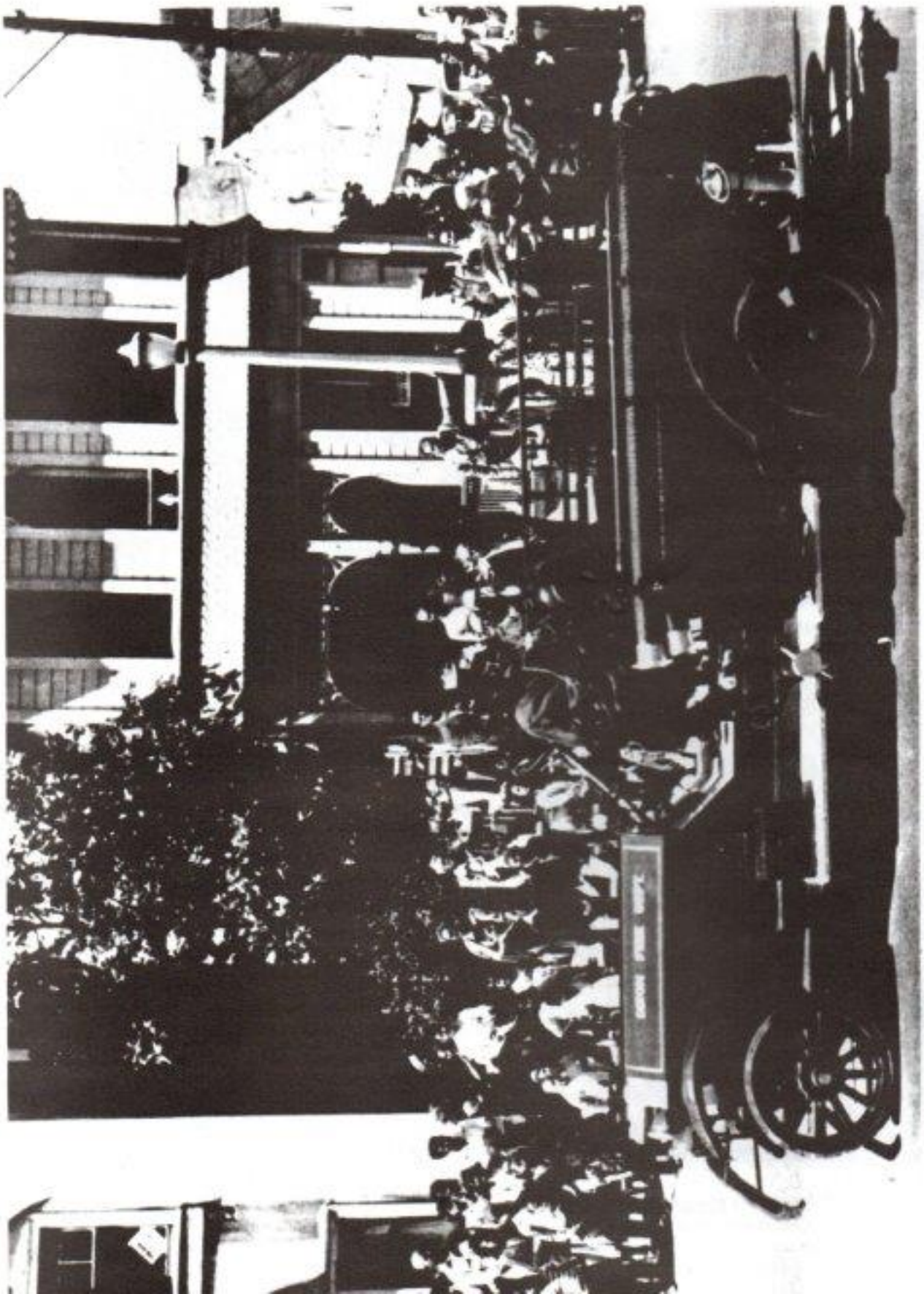
Pictured here is the actual ACULEO bell mentioned in the Fire Department article. According to records at the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the bell was used as the fire alarm in Dixon from 1876 to 1883. From 1883 to1933, Peter Timm's family used it as a dinner bell. Then Louise Holly and William Timm returned the bell to the Dixon Fire Department. It was donated to Sutter's Fort in 1939. It can be seen near the entrance gate at the Fort.
Photos by Marion Phillips, June 20, 1997.

In this picture is the bell which was <u>thought to have been</u> the ACULEO BELL. It was in the courtyard at the Neighborhood Christian School at the Fair Grounds. It has been moved to the location of the new fire station on Ford Way.

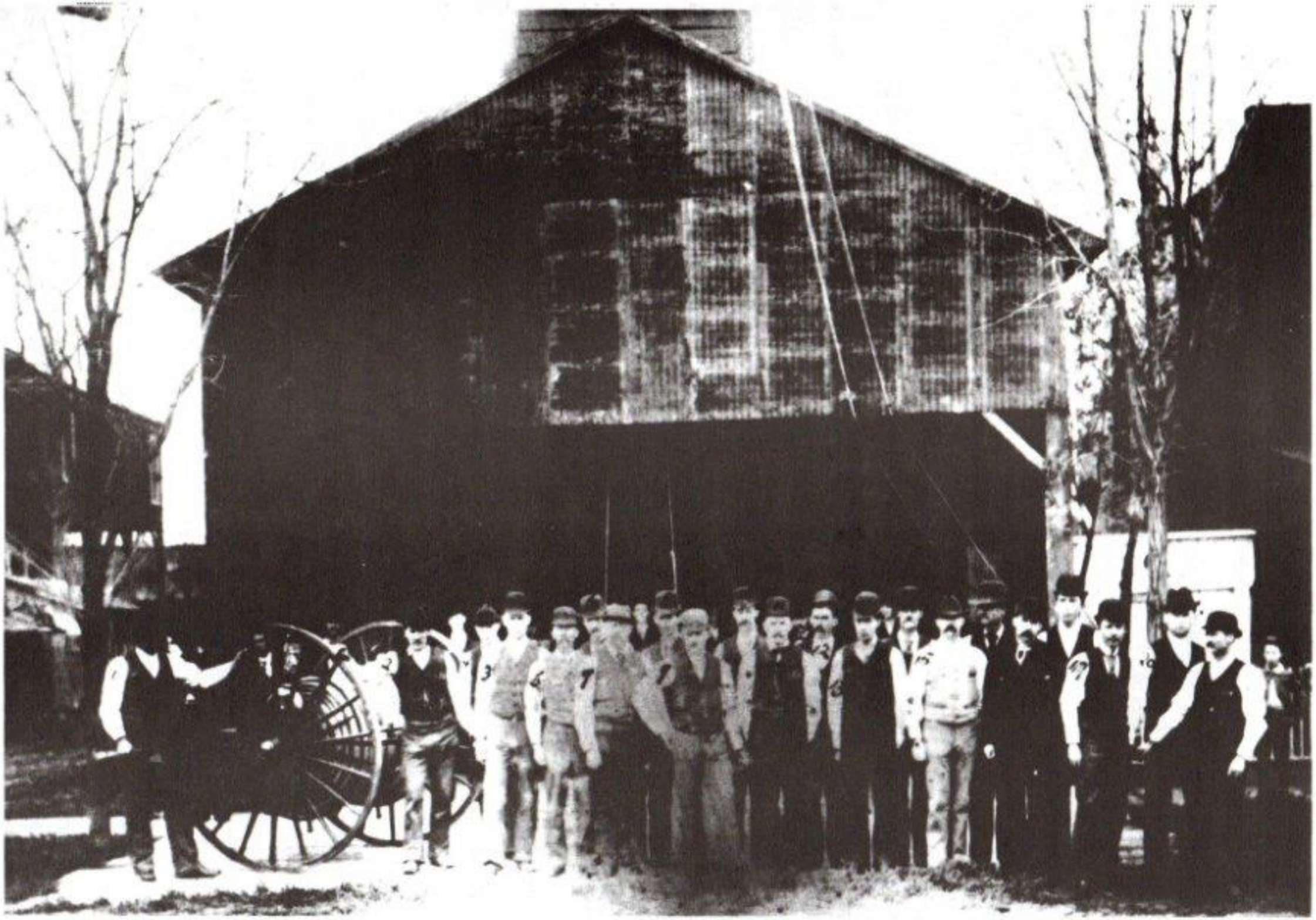
Also reported at the meeting on October 1, 1989, was the following, by Olin Timm:

One thing I'd like to mention. We have a ranch up in the hills. I inherited half of it and bought the other half which was originally one ranch. I have a title search on the part that my father bought from the McCune Company and I really never looked at it. My mother had it in the safe deposit box. I got it out two or three months ago. I thought the McCunes just bought the ranch. That's not the way it happened at all. The place was divided up into about 160 acre pieces. About five of them were purchased as military warrants for soldiers who had served in the War of 1812. So the men must have been about 65 years old when they acquired the property. Some of them actually moved onto it. Most of them got the warrants, turned them over to a broker in Stockton, who in turn sold these warrants for $160 or $200 to somebody else. So that was the first transfer of the property. There were six or seven different owners before the McCune Company started accumulating this property. It took them ten years to buy all the different parcels and put them together.

One of the owners was part of the Donner party and that fits in with some information I got from my neighbor, a rather elderly man, who said "we used to call this creek in front of your house Donner Branch." That adds up, too. If you start nosing around about your property's history it may be very interesting.



The American LaFrance Fire Engine was known as The C.P. Huntington....arrived in Dixon in July 1921. $10,000 was raised for its purchase - Leonard Ferguson was Fire Chief. The LaFrance was in a garage in Grass Valley in 1960.



EARLY DIXON FIRE DEPARTMENT OR COMPANY

Left to Right: 1. Henry Timm, 2. J. Gillespie, 3. John Nagle, 4. Louis Peterson, 5. J. Dale, 6. Arthur Henry, 7. Frank Newby, 8. Bill Fitzpatrick, 9. Henry Duprey, 10. G.D. Schulze, 11. _____ Keating, 12. Ed Fitzpatrick, 13. Harry Miller, 14. Leonard Longmire, 15. Martin Hamilton, 16. Jack Hulen, 17. Baley Duke, 18 Bob Willott, 19. Bert Barnes, 20. Louis Mass, 21. Carlie Harlen, 22 John Benson, 23. L. Upham, 24. Ike Putnam, 25. Louis McDermott, 26. Jim Rockford

Bud Dannenberg

on the History of his family and the Dixon area

as intereviewed by Olin Timm

July *26, 1989*

This is the history of my family that started with Joe Davis. He was born in 1832 in Kentucky. His family moved to Iowa when he was four years old. He was raised there until he was the age of 20 or 21.

In 1855, he and his two brothers and two cousins drove a herd of cattle from St. Louis, Missouri, to California for John Sutter. They delivered them to Sutter at what they called "French Trails." After they delivered the cattle they did some prospecting in the Sutter Buttes of California. Then they went to San Francisco and booked passage on a boat down to the Isthmus. They didn't realize at the time that the ship they booked passage on was one of the ships in the Walker expedition they were sending down to take over Central America. They didn't find that out 'til they got down there. They waited and they escaped from camp and made their way across the Isthmus with some others who were in the same situation.

. . .by shipping eggs and butter from Elmira to San Francisco.

He arrived back in Iowa and married his wife there in 1857. They had two children born to them when they were in Iowa, my grandmother and her sister. Later, when they were in Nevada, they had a son and after they'd settled here (in the Dixon area) there was a daughter born. The third daughter only lived until she was about two years old.

In 1861 or '62, he (Joe Davis) decided to come to California with his family. So his wife and his two children came through Missouri on the California Trail to Nevada. When they got to Nevada they were getting short on money so they stopped there and worked in the mine for a while. My great-grandmother ran a boarding house and took in miners. He later came into California --in 1862 -- and settled on the present-day ranch. When he arrived in the area, it had been a dry year and the vegetation around Dixon wasn't that high and the water was harder to get because you had to dig deeper to get it. When he got down to where the present ranch is, there was lower ground. The ground was wet and the oats were high--as he said, "As high as the backs of oxen." On the homestead here, there happened to be a natural spring and they decided to settle where the natural spring was. He went back and brought his family down and built a squatter's cabin and lived in that until they built a small house. He purchased the land from the Land Bureau in San Francisco for a dollar and a half an acre. I don't know why he didn't take the homestead act, but he didn't. He still had to live on it the same as he did for a homestead.

Years later, they built a small home consisting of one large room. They partitioned it off and had a loft above where the children slept. As they progressed, they had porches built around that they sealed in and thus they got a small home.

In 1883 or '82, they built a two-story addition to the house which consists of eight rooms. My grandmother paid for the building of the house by shipping eggs and butter from Elmira to San Francisco. She also had a millinery shop in Elmira. When Elmira burned, she didn't rebuild her shop. She built a room on her present home and did her millinery work there, as well as taking care of her other duties.

Two of the girls, my grandmothr and her sister, attended Napa College. The college moved from Napa to Berkeley and from Berkeley to Stockton. It's now called the College of the Pacific (U.O.P., University of the Pacific). My grandmother graduated from there with a degree in Music and her sister took a degree in Art.

When my great-grandmother passed away, she and my grandfather had accumulated 640 acres of land.

My grandmother's sister married a man by the name of Reddick who used to live over on Pedrick Road. His family moved from there to Lompoc and lived out on the coast. They had a ranch out there. They bought eighty acres in Lompoc Valley. He happened to be the first to grow flower seeds in the local valley, marigold seeds for Mendocino.

In 1906 my great-grandfather retired and my grandfather Zimmerman and my grandmother took over the ranch. My grandfather was born in 1853 in Lansing, Michigan. He left home when he was about fourteen or fifteen and he ended up in Binghamton. When he was about fifteen years old he went to work for a blacksmith there by the name of Smith and learned the trade of blacksmithing.

He later went to work for Monte Currey and was foreman for Currey for nine years.

During the time he was foreman for Currey, he married my grandmother, in 1890. They had six children, five boys and a girl, who was my mother. When my grandfather left Currey, he purchased sixty acres of land on the east side of Vaca Valley and planted a fruit orchard. It's just above what they used to call Buck Town in the Vaca Valley.

While he was running the fruit orchard, he also had a blacksmith shop and took in some blacksmithing work. Then he farmed some dry land farming on Sievers Road. Then in 1906 he moved over to the home ranch and started farming that when my great-grandfather retired.

He did his blacksmithing work here on the ranch as well. At the time of his death, he was farming approximately 1200 acres of dry land farming and some livestock. During the time he farmed he had his own teams and a combine, but during harvest time he needed more teams for the harvester, so he and old Jake Rohwer used to go together and furnish enough mules to run the harvester. Some of the Rohwer boys worked on the machine during the harvest season.

My father came to this county. He was born and raised in Sutter City. He worked in several of the western states until he came here to Dixon when he was about 20 years old. He went to work for the Dally family in Elmira and worked with them during the haying and harvest season. In the fall, he went to work for Steve Parker. The following year Steve Parker decided to open a grocery store in Oakland, so he hired my father to run the ranch which was about 900 acres at the time.

During the time that he was working for Steve Parker he married my mother, in 1915. Four children -- two olders sisters, myself and a younger sister -- were born to them. In 1930 my mother and father purchased a ranch from The Bank of Dixon. My father died in '32 and my mother and I finished paying for the ranch. Mother passed away at 83 years old. She had spent the greater part of her life in our home here that my great-grandparents built.

In 1968, my wife and I purchased the home quarter plus another eighty acres from mother, so at the present day we own the original quarter section that was settled on, plus other ground that they accumulated. It would be I think that's about all I have on the family.

They formed a company which consisted of 26 charter members.

The Sacramento Northern had a line that ran from Oakland up to Marysville, East of Binghampton and west of Maine Prairie. In 1910 they had an idea to put a branch line from Dozier station, (which is about 12 miles south of Dixon on 113) up to Dixon. They built a railroad that came from there to the present cemetery in Dixon. It came around the west side of the cemetery and ended up where the present day post office is. That didn't run too many years. They ran two or three trains a day up and down there. They carried mail and took passengers down to the junction to meet trains going to Oakland or to Sacramento. It wasn't a very paying thing, so it eventually was just abandoned.

During the early days they made their own bricks south on 113 by Brown Road. The method of building the bricks follows: There was a yellow clay pit ----. They would dig a pit and salvage the clay that was usable for bricks from the pit. Then they'd put a fire in the bottom of the pit to get a big bunch of charcoal. They eventually would put a layer of dirt over that. Then they'd place a layer of bricks and a layer of dirt, a layer of bricks and a layer of dirt, until they had about three layers of bricks. They would cover the mound over. Most of the bricks were soft bricks. That method wasn't very consistent. You'd get glass bricks, warped bricks and things depending on how much heat they got. Most of the foundations in fireplaces and things in the immediate area were built out of brick from that particular place.

In 1912 the community of Maine Prairie decided to build a telephone system, because the Bell System wanted a heavy amount of money to put branch lines out here to the farmers. They formed a company which consisted of 26 charter members. It had eight circuits and the company operated from 1912 to 1974 when everybody went into the Bell System. The line consisted of a main trunk line that went east from the old Timm place on East A Street, south on Pedrick Road until it hit Maine Prairie Road and east to Robben Road and south again until it got down to Jepson Road.

Prior to the time that they organized the original Maine Prairie (system) they had a barbed wire system that ran up 113. It didn't prove out too well. There was a flat wire (galvanized wire) put in over the tops of the gates. The

Lehe family owned the electric power distribution system (later they sold out to P.G. & E.). Lehe put up an electric line down 113 which consisted of just one power line. During the damp air the electricity would go in the ground and so the telephone line was charged. So, they abandoned that and then formed this other company in 1912.

Quite a lot of shipping was done on the Sacramento Northern which was used quite a bit by people who wanted to go to Oakland or Sacramento or up to Marysvillle. I know our folks went to Sacramento once a year. They'd lay in a supply of groceries for winter. What they purchased at a wholesale store was shipped on the Sacramento Northern to Vale Station, not too far from where we lived. We'd pick up the stuff there and haul it home. In those days, it would take you three or four hours to make the trip.

We organized and dug our own canal.

In 1960 a group got together and formed what was called the Maine Prairie Water District. That was the last time this area had been farmed in dry-land farming and livestock. The land had been rotated because it was not that rich. We'd plant a crop of grain and then we'd let the land stay idle for two or three years and pasture sheep and cattle on it. With the building of Monticello Dam, there was waste water coming down from Solano Irrigation District through our area and we decided we could use that water to our advantage. We organized and dug our own canal. First, we drained the land by digging a series of drainage ditches that the farmers had put in themselves. Then we got the idea of putting irrigation water on the land. It didn't work out for us money-wise to build a gravity flow system, pumping uphill from the slough. We worked a deal with Solano Irrigation District to purchase their surplus of drain water and we brought it down to our existing drain ditches. Each farmer would pump the water from the ditch onto his land. This worked out well. The district consists now of about 15,000 acres. The original people who organized the district and served as the first board of directors were Arthur Brown, Gibbon Horrigan Jr., Elwood Parker, Jack Parker and myself. I still serve as the chairman of the board of Maine Prairie Water District (1989).

I was asked to find out about the type of equipment we used to farm with over the years. We started out with

The first big tractors we had were Caterpillar tractors. My Uncle did have a one-cycle wheel tractor put out by International Harvester Company that he used to use for stationary work. It wasn't too good for farm work. It was good for stationary, belt work. Things like that. As far as other things, it wasn't that practical.

The big tractors were sixty horsepower tractors. The only small wheel tractor we had at the time was one built by Ford Motor Company. They called it the Fordson. We had one of each on the ranch here. The sixty Holt was built in Stockton and a man by the name of Best built one similar to the Holt. In later years they consolidated and became what is commonly known today as the Caterpillar Corporation.

The harvesters that were built at that time were built in Stockton. Best built a harvester, and so did both Holt and Harris. They were all wooden machines. In later years, all of them except Harris moved to the Midwest and manufactured there and shipped back to the west coast. Over the years the tractors and other equipment have changed to the point that they're more or less the same as what we see today working the farms.

RECLAMATION DISTRICT 2068

By Olin Timm

My first knowledge of Reclamation District 2068 occurred when Mr. Fred Dunnicliff, editor of the Dixon Tribune, took his wife and my mother and me on a drive to see the enormous drag lines digging a canal north from Haas Slough. This was in the late twenties, and the big ditch was the beginning of a canal system designed to irrigate 15,000 acres with Sacramento River water. These 15,000 acres were located just west of the Yolo by-pass of the Sacramento River.

Time passed and my next encounter with the area was in 1939 when I was seeking summer grain stubble for my newly purchased band of sheep. The structures for 2068 had been completed eight years before but, except for a few hundred acres of Dixon Ridge soil, none of the rest of the District was being irrigated. The beet camp on Liberty Island Road was abandoned; the Mills estate had also abandoned the scheme of raising alfalfa and shipping the bales by bay barge to Millbrae Dairy south of San Francisco. I rented 1600 acres of grain barley stubble. This 1600 acres was in default for failure to pay taxes and assessments. The property had been owned by Cutler Paige of San Francisco, who was a former Chairman of the 2068 Board of Trustees. This is the same property that four years later my Uncle Bob Bowen and I bid on: (320 acres), on the Fairfield courthouse steps. That day there were 1,100 acres of delinquent property for sale. Why this interest in purchasing land in an almost defunct irrigation district? The answer--a new crop, ladino clover, grown for the purpose of fattening livestock.

The Reclamation Board moved to purchase the assets of the East Dixon Irrigation and Drainage Plan for $21,050.

Several years later I became a Trustee of Reclamation District 2068 and an active member in rebuilding the District. It is because of this interest that I am developing the story of 2068. Everett Whiting, a present trustee, persuaded his reluctant wife, Elva, to assist me by copying District records. She did, in time, become an ardent amanuensis, and the following history could not have been written without her help.

On April 7, 1924, a group of landowners petitioned the Solano County Board of Supervisors for the formation of a Reclamation District. Of these petitioners, well over 80 percent were investors from "out of town," mostly from San Francisco. Crocker, Mills, Kate Winship, Santana, Cutler Paige, Ramsdale Stowe and Marks, and Nunes together owned 9370 of the 15,000 acres contained in the application. The petition was approved, and at the first meeting of the District on July 22, J. W. Preston was elected President and Felix Swan was appointed manager with a salary of $300 per month and C. Houston, attorney, at a salary of $250 a month.

On October 6, the Reclamation Board moved to purchase the assets of the East Dixon Irrigation and Drainage Plan for $21,050. The assets consisted of (1) maps, plans and surveys, (2) water rights under application for unappropriated water of the State of California for agricultural purposes. Except for engineering costs of $990 the balance of the $21,050 was paid to Felix Swan for promotion expenses.

The landowners of the District chose to form their irrigation system under State Reclamation law, rather than Irrigation District law because of the voting rules. Under Irrigation law, only residents within the boundaries of the district are eligible to vote. Under Reclamation District law, voting is by assessed valuation of parcels owned and voting may be cumulative. Owners may vote for all candidates or may cast all their assessed valuation on one candidate. Since the large majority of landowners in the district were absentee, the Reclamation Law was an obvious choice. Even if the District had been formed under Irrigation District law, there would have been the question of how many residents could vote. On the 1600 acres of the Cutler Paige property there was one structure, occupied only when Sam Silvey was operating his still.

On February 27, 1925, engineer F. C. Herman submitted the plan for 2068 to the State Reclamation Board. These plans were approved and the Board opened the project for bids which were finally let to the successful bidders, Haas F. Dougherty, who started construction in October.

To pay for this construction the Trustees called an

election for June 28, 1926, for the issuance of bonds in the amount of $550,000 with interest at 6%, and on October 18 the Solano County Treasurer was directed to sell the bonds. But it was not until December 30, 1927, 14 months later that the bonds were sold to American Mercantile for an amount left blank in the minutes. The fact that the amount was undisclosed leads one to believe that the price was below par and less than the $550,000.

By May 1928, it was realized the revenue from the bonds was not sufficient and there would need to be a new assessment. This time assessments were made directly to owners; another bond issue was not attempted. At the November 3 meeting warrants which were unpaid were extended, and on June 28, 1929, Trustees J. P. Thomsen and Felix Swan moved that all warrants due within ninety days be extended for four years. During this time, special assessments on the land were being made to complete construction. A monthly four-year extension of warrants began on February 28, 1930.

"Dixon Ridge" soils which were classified as silty clay loam

Finally, on July 5, 1930, a PG&E bill in the amount of $1653 was presented, indicating some water was being pumped for irrigation. During the period from 1930 to 1939, various irrigated crops, including beets and alfalfa, were tried and abandoned. The monthly PG&E bill in the summer of 1939 ran from $340 to $380. The farming in the district reverted to the type it had been before the district was formed, growing barley.

The chief reason for the inability of the farmers to grow the row crops and alfalfa was the state of the existing knowledge of handling clay soils. The soil particles which make up clay are called colloids. (The word is derived from Greek words meaning "like glue.") When water is applied to clay soils much of the moisture is bonded with the colloids, much as the water added to dehydrated limestone (cement) bonds itself into a solid structure. Thus, when moist clay is manipulated into a seedbed, much of the moisture is bound together with the clay particles and becomes unavailable for sprouting seeds. Unlike cement, however, the water bound together with the colloidal particles eventually is released and large cracks develop in the "adobe" soil.

On the "Dixon Ridge" soils, which were classified as silty clay loam, there is much less loss of available moisture than in strictly clay soils. This allowed farmers to manipulate the soil, hopefully between spring rains, and then plant the seeds into moisture, or , failing rains, to irrigate flat strip checks, then work the ground and still plant into moisture.

The modern technique of rounded seed beds with furrows allows the seed to be planted in dry ground and, subsequently, given moisture by running water down furrows. The water seeps into the beds from below, sprouting seeds.

Clay soil presents another problem to plants with deep roots, such as alfalfa. The tightly bound particles do not allow deep penetration of the roots and yields are consequently less. So the original attempts at farming failed.

But in the latter part of the '30s an increasing number of irrigation acres were being developed for pasture. One plant suitable for sheep was ladino clover. Many of the feeder lambs purchased by the Howard Vaughn-Brown partnership were being pastured in the Turlock area. Some thought that Reclamation District 2068 might be developed into a similar pasture area. However, the financial condition of the District was so poor that no operator was willing to undertake the burden of unpaid assessments as well as the risk of an untried crop. By August 1939, the calls to repay the $550,000 bonds had totaled $205,000 and of these calls only $26,000 had been paid.

It was at the August 4 meeting that the trustee J.W. Preston, Jr., H. Dillon Winship and Felix Swan voted for a refunding bond election in the amount of $160,000 to replace the $524,000 bond outstanding.

On September 15, the landowners of the District voted to issue the $162,000 refinancing bonds. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which was established during the Hoover administration to revitalize failed business, purchased these bonds and the $550,000 original issue was canceled. It is my understanding, from a conversation with Dillon Winship, that the R.F.C. paid off the original bond holders. Also, the R.F.C. insisted that Felix Swan be removed as trustee and manager of the District, but it was not until a year later that James E. Wiggins was elected secretary and manager. On October 15, 1940, Jim Wiggins was hired at a salary of $160 a month. He was also hired by Mills and Winship to manage their properties. In all the years after his removal, Felix Swan never missed a board meeting. He continually critized the Board actions, accusing them of discriminating in a failure to deliver water.

Other board changes occured at the same October 1940 meeting. Dillon Winship was elected President, Angus

Madden replaced Preston who had died, and C.D. O'Sullivan, representing the Mills Estate, had replaced Felix Swan. Also, the Houston law firm was relieved of its duties and was replaced by Sinclair Dobbins at a fee of $50 a meeting.

By this time, there were several thousand acres which had reverted to the District and Solano County because of failure to pay district assessments and county taxes. In November of 1940 the trustees instructed Wiggins to start negotiating with the Supervisors for what monies they expected to recover from these lands. Finally, in January 1942, the Supervisors accepted 10% of delinquent county taxes. This same month the Trustees started their first advertising of delinquent tracts.

All of these problems were aggravated by low tides in June

The first sale of 337 acres was to William and Nancy Campbell for $10 an acre in February. Also, in February, the board authorized the Secretary to pay 50 cents an acre to quitclaim the Cutler Paige 1600 acres. Then, in September, M.T. Bettencourt purchased 150 acres, also at $10 per acre. Another tax sale was in early 1943, also for $10 per acre. This was the balance of the Cutler Paige property and included Section 9 which was sold to Voice of America, U.S. Government. It was at this last sale that my uncle and I purchased 320 acres. William and Nancy Campbell were the other purchasers. The amount owed to the county was $43 to $46 an acre. 10% of this amount resulted in $4.30 to $4.60 per acre. The balance went to the District. The amount owed to the county for Bowen-Timm property was $4.30 per acre. Multiplying by 10 made $43 per acre in back taxes owed the county. The balance ($5.70) went to the District.

Felix Swan was always in attendance whenever sales were made on the courthouse steps. He had opposed this last sale because of a wildcat well being drilled in the district. Since all of these sales were negotiated ahead of time so that the County and District could be sure of buyers at the time of bidding, the trustees on this sale chose to sell the land with mineral rights except for section nine. In negotiating the section 9 sale, the Voice of America agreed to purchase the property without mineral rights. Later, Swan claimed that the advertising for this sale was illegally misleading and eventually persuaded a lawyer landholder, Mr. Breu, to examine the sale. Breu found that the sales were legal.

All of these purchasers of District land, those who purchased tax delinquent land as well as those like Howard Vaughn who bought the Nunes property, did so with the plan to develop irrigated pasture. In the spring of 1942, Mr. Gulley, who had farmed in the Turlock Irrigation District, planted ladino clover on the Ramsdale Stowe and Marks property. Also, in 1941, the District leased tract 52 to Gulley, first to plant barley and, subsequently, in 1942, ladino clover.

Bill Campbell began seeding the land he purchased immediately. Instead of leveling, he contoured his grounds to flood each elevation. After flooding one contour, he would then pull the gates and let the water flow into the next lower contour. At the last contour, the gate was pulled and the water went into the drain. Others leveled their ground and irrigated down the field in strip check with much less waste of water. The rush into ladino and, subsequently, trefoil was on.

As more and more acreage was put under irrigation, inadequacies in the system became apparent. There were three pumping lifts to the plan. Pump One took water from a channel dug from Haas Slough. Pump Two raised the water again and from this elevation distribution ditches carried water to the south and lower part of the district.

The next lifts were at pumping stations Three and Four. These lifts were built to provide water for the northern parts of the district.

The strains in the system were several. The channel between Haas Slough and Pump One had obstructions. Spots where the digging was tough had not been thoroughly dredged. And the pumps at Station One proved to be inadequate. Eventually, these obstructions were dredged. Also, the area designed for Pump Two to handle was too large and at Pump Three the catch or surge basins were too small and of insufficient height.

All of these problems were aggravated by low tides in June which reduced the amount of water at Pump One. A strong north wind would pile up a foot of water at Pump One. This would increase the lift necessary to move water from One to Two. Any increase of lift reduces pumping capacity.

The strain on Pump Two was handled first by taking water by gravity out of the canal between One and Two and running it in the drainage ditch along to Liberty Island Road and then lifting the water out of the drainage ditch into

the distribution ditches. This procedure relieved Pump Two of one thousand acres.

Subsequently, as more areas were irrigated, drain water was captured and lifted into the canal between Pumping Stations One and Two. The use of drain water when it was available became a technique for watering all the peripheral parcels of the District. Before this policy was adopted, however, our drainage water was tested for injurious salts.

Another one of the problems was the dilapidated condition of the trash racks in front of the pumping stations. These were repaired eventually, but before this was done the District's electrician, Hugh Orrick, would use his diving bell helmet to go down and remove obstructions. Fortunately for the District, Hugh had worked on pumps drawing water from the Sacramento River and had used a bell when sturgeon were sucked into pump impellers. In 1946, Angus Madden resigned as Trustee of 2068 and I was appointed in his place. Serving on the Board started a new learning experience for me. Not only did I learn the intricacies of an irrigation district, but the association with Dillon Winship and Antonio "Tory" Torriggino was like a course in continuing education.

Dillon owned the Georgia Fast Express, similar to U.P.S., but had been brought to San Francisco to manage the Kate Winship Estate. He dealt with people in much larger negotiations than I had ever experienced. I watched him handle our agreement with the navy as they acquired District property for the Navy Radio Station. Dillon continually used Georgian aphorisms, such as: "That outfit's so poor, it's got no pot to pee in or window to throw it out of."

Tory was the son of a North Beach grocery man who finally was persuaded by A.P. Giannini to put his money in the Bank of Italy instead of in a pit below the store. Tory graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, as a civil engineer and started working for Ogden Mills. He was engineer for their Etna Power Company and frequently accompanied Mills to their hydraulic generating plants. When O'Sullivan was called into the Army during World War II, Tory managed all the Mills Estate properties, including the Mills Building in San Francisco. Tory performed all the engineering tasks of the District without charge. He redesigned the pumping plant and siphon discharge at the south end of the District. As more land was irrigated and drains were cleaned, the south end received more drainage water. The situation did not become serious until the level of the water in the bypass on the other side of the levee became higher than our drainage pipe with a flap gate. As a result of continuous complaints by the southern landowner, Glen Bowlsby, and because he was right in complaining that the size of the drain pump was inadequate, the Board finally installed a larger pump with the siphon designed by Tory.

Both Dillon and Tory were intensely interested in developing the District

Tory and I frequently met for lunch in San Francisco. Once in his office I talked to him about converting some silos to grain elevators. He commented that to handle those feeds you have to know the angle of repose. I asked what was the angle of repose, and he replied: "You need to understand the slopes at which these grains will flow. I'll engineer it for you." As he bent over his drawing board, I hesitated. He turned from his stool and drawing board and said: "Olin, it won't cost you anything."

Both Dillon and Tory were intensely interested in developing the District into an efficient operation, and they treated our problems as the most important projects in their lives. In 1950, Dillon resigned as Chairman. He remained a Trustee, but turned the Chairmanship over to me.

After the original planting of clover proved a success, more and more acreage was put into irrigated pasture. In 1944, clover acreage kept increasing until by the middle of 1955 almost the entire acreage of the district's 13,500 acres was in pasture. By the late 50's, the District was feeding more lambs than any other area in the U.S. It was not until the latter part of the 60's that row crops began being grown in the District.

It was in the successive seasons 1983-84 to 1985-86 that the original pumps on the main canal were replaced. These were the Byron Jackson pumps that were installed in 1927, which had essentially lain idle 34 years.

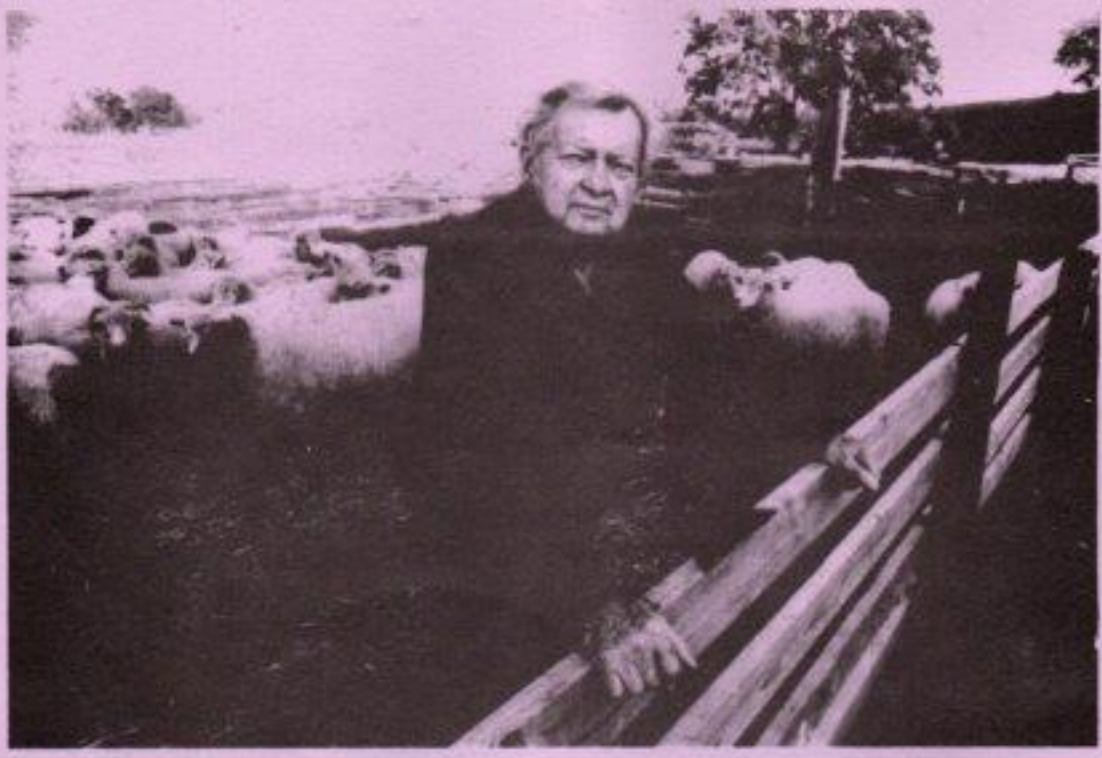
Now the District sits with rebuilt facilities and two million dollars in the bank as reserves. The two million has developed from royalties received from section nine. The District now receives $100,000 a year from interest on the two million - quite a change from the four year postponements of warrants issued in the 1930's.

DIXON HISTORY

Dixon Train Station

VOLUME 6 • SPRING 1998

Journal of The Dixon Historical Society



OLIN HENRY TIMM

April 24, 1913 - May 21, 1997

Olin Timm served as President of the Dixon Historical Society from March 1988 until his death on May 21, 1997.

He was instrumental in starting the printing of DIXON HISTORY. He taped the oral programs presented at our meetings and had them transcribed for written production.

It would be fitting to have a program documenting his many activities for publication in a future issue of DIXON HISTORY. Meanwhile, this issue is dedicated to his memory.

DIXON HISTORY
SPRING 1998

With this issue the Dixon Historical Society publishes its sixth volume of Dixon History. The material comes from the members' presentations at our quarterly meetings and their individual writings. We hope that the re-telling of the events and anecdotes in this booklet will serve to stimulate perhaps forgotten memories in the minds of our readers.

Again, Marion Phillips and Kathryn Orrell should be acknowledged with much appreciation for their proofreading of the manuscripts.

For information regarding membership in the Dixon Historical Society, or if you have questions or comments, please write to:

The Dixon Historical Society
P.O. Box 814
Dixon, CA 95620

The Dixon Electric Train

by Kathryn Orrell

The operating principle of the electric railroad is almost identical to the operating principle of the electric elevator. One Frank Julian Sprague, an associate of Thomas Edison, invented both the electric elevator and the electric railway. In simplest description, the electric elevator has a motor in the basement of a building or house, and above it, on each floor are wires built in a vertical fashion which carry the electric impulse from the basement motor to each floor. Buttons are installed in the elevator car which can transmit the impulse that moves the elevator car either upward or downward. Frank Julian Sprague took this same idea and applied it on the horizontal. Instead of having a motor in a basement, he installed a motor in a little station house. Each car on the railway had an attachment to this motor which would cause the train to move.

The original electric trains were called "trolleys" because they had long poles that extended upward from the car and attached to an overhead electric wire. Later trains had a third rail which carried the electricity. These third electrified rails, however, were very dangerous, and were also attractive to children attempting, in their games, to jump across the third rail in an attempt to "show off" to their peers. Many children were seriously injured in doing so. An amusing, but also sad, story originated in Marin County concerning a bull who had broken out of his pen and had charged down the railroad track. For some unknown reason, he was attracted to the third rail and repeatedly charged it. Each time he would be thrown down. But he would get up and charge again until he was finally killed. The train which eventually came through Dixon, however, was an overhead trolley, and did not incorporate the third rail.

The first electric trains in California were in Marin County, and became very popular tourist attractions. The motors were strong enough to pull the trains up the hills of Mount Tamalpais, and, hopefully, the brakes were strong enough to hold the train going down hill. The first electric train near the Central Valley ran down the eastern side of the Sierras; then later, enough people got together to build a railroad on the west side of the Sierras. This western train ran from Chico down into the Bay Area which would then have to cross the Bay on a ferry, the overall purpose being to get into San Francisco. A famous ferry, the Ramon Ferry, was able to carry six cars at a time across the water. The cars would then unload, get onto tracks, and thence into San Francisco. By this time, therefore, there were three routes operating in Northern California: the one which ran up and down the coast from San Francisco to Marin County, the one on the eastern side of the Sierras, and the third route on the Western side of the mountains from Chico to San Francisco. This third route is the one which eventually came through Dixon, thence to the Ramon Ferry and San Francisco.

To repeat, our train was an overhead trolley, and therefore, did not have many serious accidents associated with it. This particular train was called the Sacramento Northern. It followed about an 185 mile run from Chico to San Francisco, and this run was one of the longest in the entire United States at that time. The Sacramento Northern was a consolidation of two other long and separate types of lines. One of the lines included Woodland and Vacaville and was originally called the Northern Electric.

In 1906, the Interurban was completed all the way to Oroville, and by December, it had established service south to Marysville. On September 7, 1907, through service was established to Sacramento. This system still did not include Dixon. The portion of the system between Oakland and Sacramento was called the Oakland and Antioch, later renamed Oakland, Antioch & Eastern, or O.A. & E. Dixon doesn't come into the picture until about 1913. By this date, approximately one thousand people lived in Dixon, and the men promoting the building into Dixon considered it to be a profitable enterprise. There is some argument about this 1913 date. But it is pretty sure that service was well established by 1915, because Mr. Petersen here in town paid the fares for some Dixon children to go on the excursion into San Francisco to attend the 1915 Fair. The train carrying the children did depart from Dixon. However, other dates I encountered concerning the first arrival in Dixon were 1914 and 1917. So, members of you who have memories or other information can accept or discard as you wish.

There is also disagreement about the route of the tracks themselves. Original debate involved routing the tracks down First Street vs. Jackson St. Others, particularly officials who owned the train, preferred that it be routed down present-day Adams Street. Also, discussion involved how to get across the Southern Pacific tracks - build underpasses or overpasses.

Another point of contention was the location of the station house. Some remember it as being located near the present Post Office. Regardless of these disagreements, we do have information about the actual festivities of the day the train did officially enter Dixon - which one source states was October 16, 1913 - and was officially the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern.

One Melville Dozier, not a Dixonite, was very instrumental in getting the train to route through Dixon. Mr. Dozier estimated that he would be able to build the entire first unit for $30,000, which was less than the estimates of the State Railway Commission. Stock was sold after a vigorous campaign was launched to obtain investors. The railroad was not considered to be a State railroad, rather to be a "people built" railroad because of the stock investors. Electricity for the cars was furnished by the Great Western Power Company, the "juice" coming down from the big plant up in the Feather River Canyon.

Not everybody in Dixon and surrounding areas was in favor of the routing of the tracks. There was a story of a farmer who vehemently protested that the railroad was not going through his farm - absolutely! One particular day on which he was absent from his farm, his wife stood out with a shotgun and shot at everybody trying to route the railroad through her property. Whether or not she succeeded in stopping the construction, I did not discover.

October 16, 1913 was a day of celebration. Each town on the route had its own celebration. Newspaper articles state the "Dairy City" (as Dixon was then known) attracted many visitors to enjoy our celebration. Sixteen hundred people were served barbecue - some six hundred more than the actual Dixon population. Barbecue pits were set up close to the station, and lunch was served in the driveway of the West Valley lumber shed. A.F. Beckley organized the people so that food could be served swiftly and efficiently. An entrance for only one person at a time was set up on the west side of the driveway, and as each passed along the "food route", his plate was filled with portions of beef, lamb and other goodies. The barbeque committee consisted of Beckley, A.B. Parker and W.T. Dawson. Assisting these three were the ladies: Mrs. R.D. Mayes, Mrs. Walter Baker, Mrs. S.G. Wilson, Mrs. G.E. Maceroy, Mrs. Nagel and Mrs. King. Included also were Mrs. W.H. Gerlach, Mrs. J.C. Grove, Mrs. H. C. Grove, Mrs. S.S. Silvey, Mrs. G.S. Johnson, Mrs. F.G. Dunnicliff, Mrs. C.L. Apperson, Mrs. A.B. Parker, Mrs. H. Fisher, Mrs. L.A. Morris, Mrs. G. Steinmiller, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Parkhurst, Mrs. Runge and Mrs. Newby.

The expenses were $222.00 and donations came within $5.00 of this amount. The largest donation, $50.00, was given by the Chamber of Commerce. The following people donated sheep to the barbecue: H.L. Bissell, A.B. Parker, J. Kilkenny, P.M. Allen, G.W. Morris, J.R. Bloom, J. B. Thompson, J. S. Hill, J. H. Petersen (the one who paid the fares of the children attending the 1915 San Francisco Fair) W.B. Petersen, and J.W. Marshall. Cakes were contributed by the aforementioned ladies, and cash moneys were paid by other individuals. The main expenses were $75.00 for a steer and $25.00 for the barbecue chef.

Following the lunch at eleven a.m., the official "first excursion" started. Three spacious cars were loaded with 300 passengers, including the officers of the railroad and a band under the leadership of Julius Weyand.

At the end of the "first day festivities" a concert and a dance were held - this day happened to be the last Saturday night of the concert season - a fitting and happy ending to a "big day" in the history of Dixon.

Here are some "firsts" which took place after regular service was established:

1) Leland Hyde was the first to buy a round trip ticket to San Francisco.

2) J.D. Johnson and Son received the first freight over the new line.

3) The Dixon Milling Company shipped the first carload of alfalfa meal over the new line.

4) G.W. Foster, 84 years old, was the oldest man to make the trip on the train.

5) Mrs. Valara Haria was the first woman to get on the first train outward bound.

The timetables of the Sacramento Valley Electric were: Westbound at 7:40 a.m., 9:20 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:35 p.m., 3:00 p.m., 5:35 p.m., and 7:32 p.m.

On Sundays only, the train would leave San Francisco at 8 o'clock p.m. and would arrive in Dixon at 11:05 p.m.

In 1920, the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern went into receivership and became known as the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad, later the Sacramento Short Line. By 1927, after these many changes, the line was known as the Western Pacific. However, the owners of the electric train which serviced Dixon (the O.A.&E.) according to statistics, did not consider Dixon profitable and service was therefore discontinued in August 1917.

The Sacramento Northern's first electric train arriving in Dixon in 1913. The garage is that of the Dixon Auto Service Company, and the depot sign reads: "Sacramento Valley Electric," "Waiting Room."

THE DIXON FIRE DEPARTMENT

As reported at the Dixon Historical Society meeting on October 1, 1989
by Rick Dorris

A lot of this material has been complied by one of our volunteers, Pat Benefield, who has a lot of documents and has taken some time to go through them. With history, the longer you wait before somebody writes it down the more the stories get changed 'til there's four or five different versions. What I have today are some notes. Also, there is a small verbal document by Elbert Holly on the history of Dixon that was transcribed and it has a small section on the Fire Department.

Any western city in the United States was leveled by fire at one time or another. The gold rush is really what brought the people here. Wooden towns grew up real fast. San Francisco was a wooden town until it burned down about the seventh time and somebody figured "maybe we oughta use bricks," which they did. A lot of those buildings are still there today.

I'm not originally from Dixon but West Sacramento I've lived here since 1977. I've always been attracted to Dixon. I wanted to move here before I did.

The Fire Department here, according to the best recollection we have, started with the bucket brigade in 1876. The Chief was the Postmaster and Constable at the time, B.F. Newby. As typical of those days, one or two fires a year were the major things to deal with. When the railroad come through, locomotives had steam engines. The first thing they do is throw "clinkers" everywhere. It was a cinder bed with lots of fires. When I grew up, I saw the last of the steam engines going out and the Diesel engines were coming in. We lived right where the S.P. tracks crossed the Sacramento River in Sacramento.

In 1877, Dixon was having a lot of fires due to steam engines, so a fire company was organized, of volunteers. It consisted of storing water barrels in strategic places around town, keeping buckets with them, and being ready for a fire. That was very common practice in a lot of towns. Ever notice how fire buckets are round on the bottom? That's so they can't be used for anything else. The town painter can't take it off the wall and use it to put paint in; you can't set it down; you can't use it for a mop bucket; it's a FIRE bucket!

The original members were Jay Fredrickson, William VanSant, H. Eppinger and Owen O'Neil. The water to fill the buckets came from the horse troughs and the hand pumps at the troughs. The company started to grow and in 1879 it became a little better equipped. The firemen began holding civic-type functions to raise money to buy equipment: dances, subscriptions for fire protections. In those days, everybody paid a dollar a year. The money they had then was used to buy a Babcock engine, which was a hand pump and hook- and -ladder truck. The hook-and-ladder truck is the one thing that has intrigued me the most because we had a hard time finding anybody that really has anything other than a general description of it. Benicia had probably the oldest fire department in Solano County and Dixon's was the next oldest.

In order to encourage volunteers in 1880, firemen became exempt from poll taxes and jury duty and anything else, and that would encourage men to become volunteer firemen. At that time the department grew to 40 men. They paid an average of 25¢ a month for dues. If you failed to show up at the fire you had to pay 50¢. Real incentive!

In 1879, Dixon's first big fire was reported at the home of William B. McKinley. The fire equipment then was scattered around and the firemen would be summoned by the bell that still sits out at the fairgrounds today. They would pick up the fire equipment and go to the fire.

In 1883, there was Dixon's first major fire. On Monday, November 6, 1883, at 6:30 p.m., north winds were really blowing. Fire was discovered in the Pearson House (which was where the old Farmer's Exchange was located). The rooming house was of wood frame construction, typical of the time. Before the fire department could get into action, the house was totally engulfed in flames. The heat was so intense that the firemen on the roof of the Union Hall were driven off. The Central Pacific Railroad Depot began to burn, along with the warehouse located next door. All efforts were then directed at saving the contents of the homes and stores along Main Street. The stores kept kegs of powder that blew up from the intense heat, thus further spreading the fire. Ranchers from around town came to assist in the fire fighting. The Bank of Dixon and Eppinger's store on the north side of B Street, being made of brick, stopped the spread of flames. The buildings at that time that were built of brick helped to slow the spread of fire. Where there were wooden buildings, the fire just continued to move. North of the Bank of Dixon, a livery stable was saved and King's Hotel was destroyed when the winds swept through the building. They didn't have much time to save much of the contents.

Looting and mobs began to take over. In less than an hour, almost every building downtown was leveled. Buildings that were saved were the Post Office, VanSant's store, Einstein's store, a dentist's office, and the Palace Hotel--all located on the east side of Main Street. Essentially, everything on the west side of North First was leveled. The Baptist Church roof caught fire but was saved, and embers

started a fire on the Petersen Ranch located seven miles south of town. (It was more like two. J.R. Bloom and Henry Petersen got fires. They both had property south of town, Bloom just behind the fairgrounds and Petersen across on the west side.--Ardeth Riedel)

In those days, the practice was to telegraph for help to different cities. Central Pacific crews would bring in fire equipment. It was very common in those days for cities as far away as San Francisco and Sacramento to come in and help on fires because they had the big steam pumping engines and the older, bigger fire departments. It was very common to load pumps up on flat-bed cars and bring them in. It would take several hours, but it would take several hours for a town to burn down. You take what you can get!

In 1884, reconstruction started. That's when the majority of the brick buildings came about. Brick buildings were at the time considered "fire proof." Metal fire shutters were part of the building code back then. If we look at the back of the Masonic Lodge and behind Farmer's Exchange, we can still see that construction today. During this rebuilding of Dixon, John Pritchard built a metal firehouse on Jackson Street, north of A Street. This was the house with the hook-and-ladder and the Babcock engine, and sat exactly where this building stands today. We've been on this site for almost a hundred years.

In 1885, a freight train engineer and conductor were arrested because their train blocked the tracks. I wish we could do that today. In 1887, the fire company modernized and bought a second hand-operated pump, which they installed on a water wagon. This was Dixon's first tanker. The standard dress for firemen in those days was red flannel shirts.

In 1889, Mel Parker's house caught fire and involved an outhouse and a woodshed. Probably the biggest boon to the fire department was the installation of a steam water pumping plant and fire hydrants in the city - in 1890. Water mains six inches in diameter were up and down the few main streets. There were 5600 feet of mains installed, 13 fire hydrants, and two 50,000 gallon water tanks, which were quite a boost. As was typical of the era, as soon as one city experienced that one major fire, as I mentioned, just about every city did; then the fire department was organized. And it has continued to grow since then. That's the organized history that we have so far.

According to the information dictated by Elbert Holly, Peter Timm, in 1880, decided the town needed a fire department. They organized and bought an old bell from a ship called "Aculeo"*, and some of the original equipment goes back to the buckets that were purchased and the steam engine. The hand pumps were bought from the San Francisco fire department. Equipment was scattered around town and had the hand drawn trucks. Then it goes on into more of the modern era, but from the little bit here, we've been able to get some history that shows that the information we are getting is pretty consistent. What we're trying to look for now is history that pertains to the era from 1910 to the 1930's. We really seem to have a big gap during that time. We have a lot of vague recollections, but no specifics.

One of our engines is our 1921 LeFrance, and we still have that engine today. We were hoping to have it here but we are a little short on space and very limited on drivers who can drive it. We've been teaching a few, but just so we can preserve that piece, we really limit who can drive it. Right now, all it needs is a paint job. Operationally, it's in perfect shape. It's been kept up. We're trying to raise some funds right now to get it painted. We have access through C.M.F. in Vacaville. They have an antique vehicle restoring shop and as soon as we can raise a couple of thousand dollars we'd like to send it over there and have them totally strip it down and repaint and reletter it. It might take a year. The paint job on it right now is not original. As best as we can find out, somewhere around the late thirties or early forties it was hauled into somebody's barn and just shot one color red and the original paint is still under it, but the original paint jobs in those days had a very ornate type of quality. It was very common to have a mural, not just the name but an actual mural, something to do with the city, painted on the hood. So we want to get it back to that quality. Some of the engines of that era that we've looked at had 13 to 20 coats of hand-rubbed lacquer on them as a standard paint job. There's a lot of nickel plating that's been painted over, and we want to completely strip it down, put the bare wood back on where it was, and totally get it back to its original condition and try to locate some of the original equipment that was on it.

When I first took over as fire chief in 1989 I was cleaning out some old files and I came across the bill of sale, the operator's manual and the delivery receipt. We bought that La France for $2,600.00. It pumps as well as it did the day we bought it. We don't want to wear it down but we like to take it out once a week to put some miles on it, keep it exercised so it runs. We find the more we run it the better it runs, but we're trying to limit how much we use it.

* *See page 8*

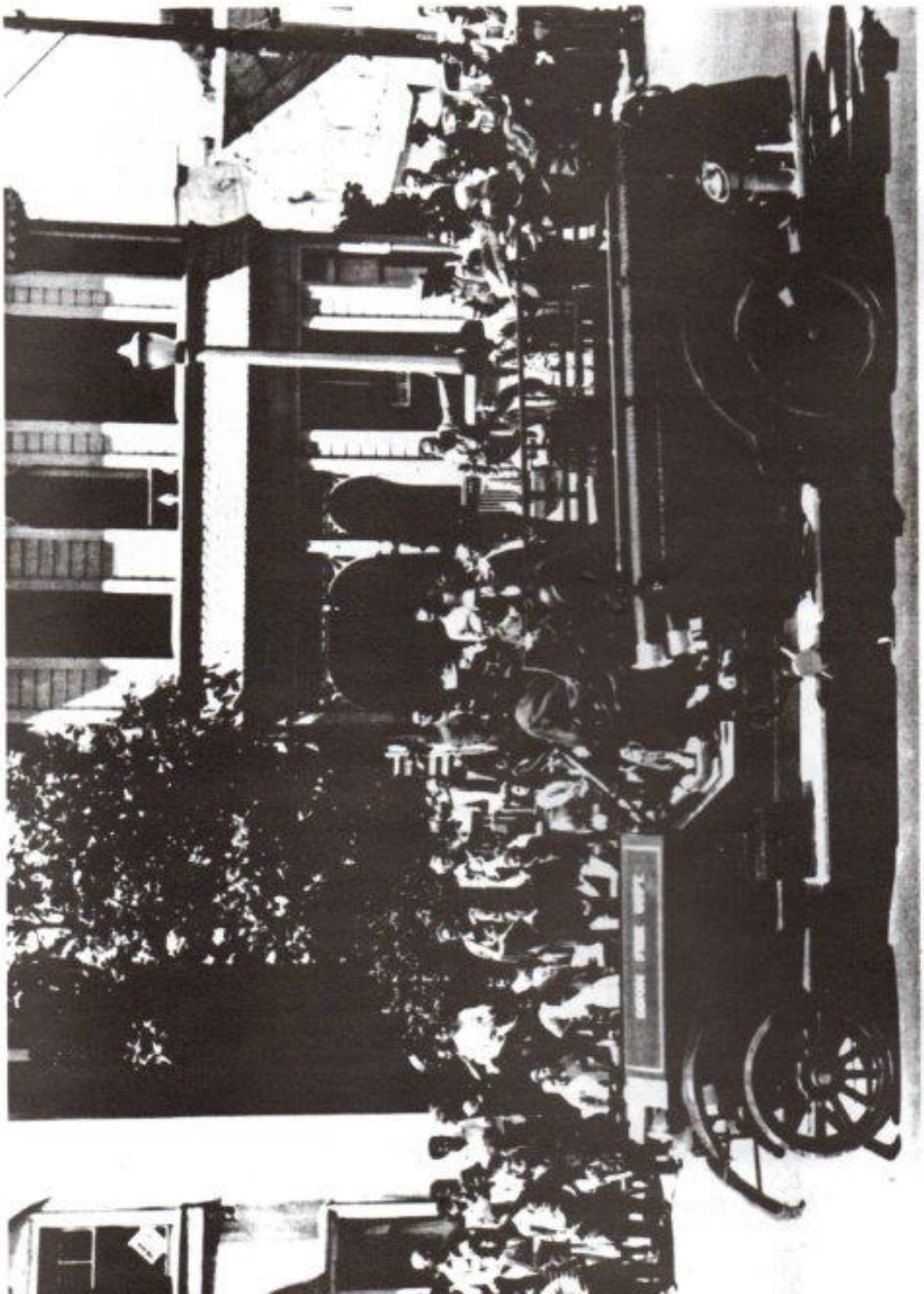
Pictured here is the actual ACULEO bell mentioned in the Fire Department article. According to records at the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the bell was used as the fire alarm in Dixon from 1876 to 1883. From 1883 to1933, Peter Timm's family used it as a dinner bell. Then Louise Holly and William Timm returned the bell to the Dixon Fire Department. It was donated to Sutter's Fort in 1939. It can be seen near the entrance gate at the Fort.
Photos by Marion Phillips, June 20, 1997.

In this picture is the bell which was <u>thought to have been</u> the ACULEO BELL. It was in the courtyard at the Neighborhood Christian School at the Fair Grounds. It has been moved to the location of the new fire station on Ford Way.

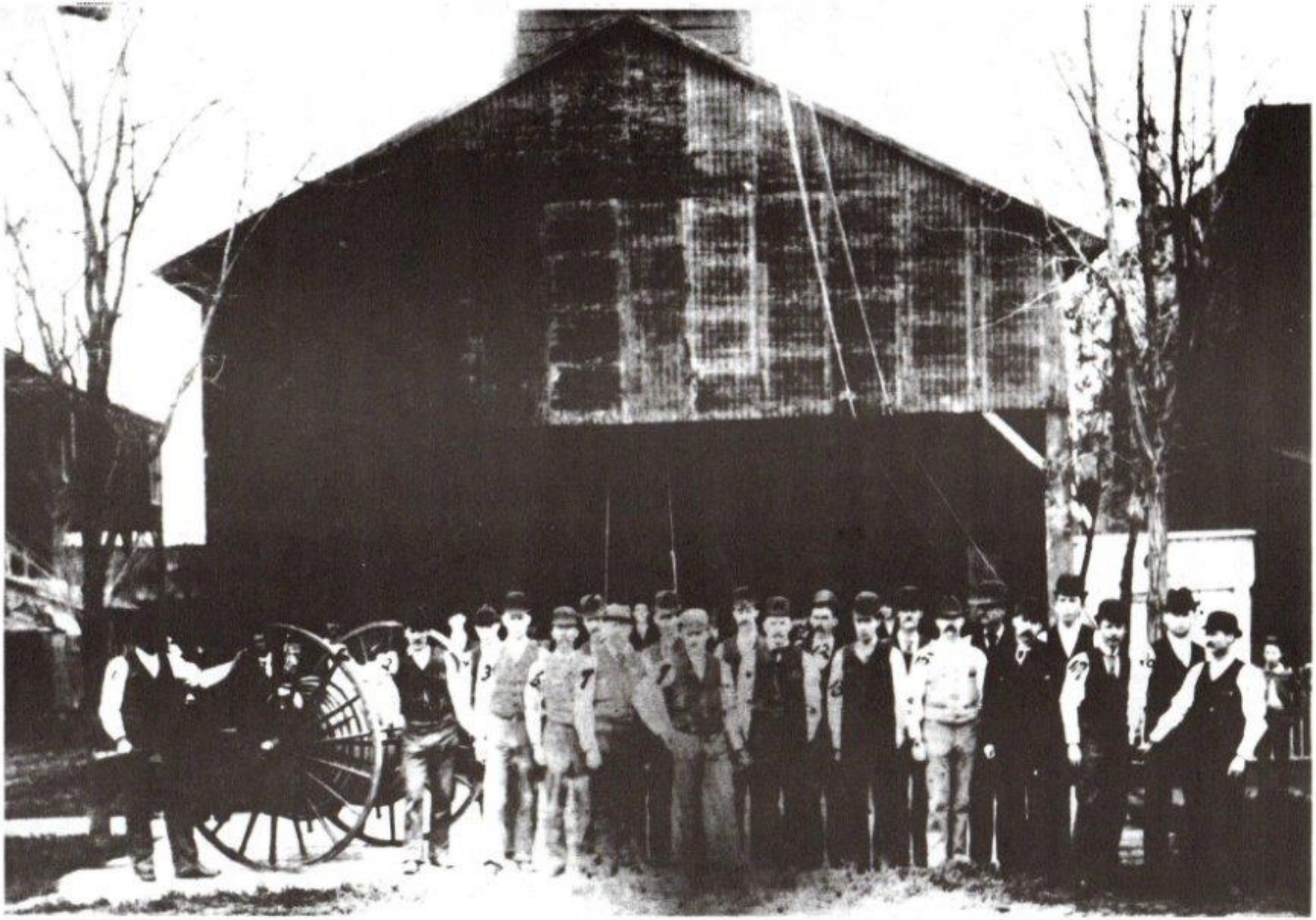
Also reported at the meeting on October 1, 1989, was the following, by Olin Timm:

One thing I'd like to mention. We have a ranch up in the hills. I inherited half of it and bought the other half which was originally one ranch. I have a title search on the part that my father bought from the McCune Company and I really never looked at it. My mother had it in the safe deposit box. I got it out two or three months ago. I thought the McCunes just bought the ranch. That's not the way it happened at all. The place was divided up into about 160 acre pieces. About five of them were purchased as military warrants for soldiers who had served in the War of 1812. So the men must have been about 65 years old when they acquired the property. Some of them actually moved onto it. Most of them got the warrants, turned them over to a broker in Stockton, who in turn sold these warrants for $160 or $200 to somebody else. So that was the first transfer of the property. There were six or seven different owners before the McCune Company started accumulating this property. It took them ten years to buy all the different parcels and put them together.

One of the owners was part of the Donner party and that fits in with some information I got from my neighbor, a rather elderly man, who said "we used to call this creek in front of your house Donner Branch." That adds up, too. If you start nosing around about your property's history it may be very interesting.



The American LaFrance Fire Engine was known as The C.P. Huntington....arrived in Dixon in July 1921. $10,000 was raised for its purchase - Leonard Ferguson was Fire Chief. The LaFrance was in a garage in Grass Valley in 1960.



EARLY DIXON FIRE DEPARTMENT OR COMPANY

Left to Right: 1. Henry Timm, 2. J. Gillespie, 3. John Nagle, 4. Louis Peterson, 5. J. Dale, 6. Arthur Henry, 7. Frank Newby, 8. Bill Fitzpatrick, 9. Henry Duprey, 10. G.D. Schulze, 11. _____ Keating, 12. Ed Fitzpatrick, 13. Harry Miller, 14. Leonard Longmire, 15. Martin Hamilton, 16. Jack Hulen, 17. Baley Duke, 18 Bob Willott, 19. Bert Barnes, 20. Louis Mass, 21. Carlie Harlen, 22 John Benson, 23. L. Upham, 24. Ike Putnam, 25. Louis McDermott, 26. Jim Rockford

Bud Dannenberg

on the History of his family and the Dixon area

as intereviewed by Olin Timm

July *26, 1989*

This is the history of my family that started with Joe Davis. He was born in 1832 in Kentucky. His family moved to Iowa when he was four years old. He was raised there until he was the age of 20 or 21.

In 1855, he and his two brothers and two cousins drove a herd of cattle from St. Louis, Missouri, to California for John Sutter. They delivered them to Sutter at what they called "French Trails." After they delivered the cattle they did some prospecting in the Sutter Buttes of California. Then they went to San Francisco and booked passage on a boat down to the Isthmus. They didn't realize at the time that the ship they booked passage on was one of the ships in the Walker expedition they were sending down to take over Central America. They didn't find that out 'til they got down there. They waited and they escaped from camp and made their way across the Isthmus with some others who were in the same situation.

. . .by shipping eggs and butter from Elmira to San Francisco.

He arrived back in Iowa and married his wife there in 1857. They had two children born to them when they were in Iowa, my grandmother and her sister. Later, when they were in Nevada, they had a son and after they'd settled here (in the Dixon area) there was a daughter born. The third daughter only lived until she was about two years old.

In 1861 or '62, he (Joe Davis) decided to come to California with his family. So his wife and his two children came through Missouri on the California Trail to Nevada. When they got to Nevada they were getting short on money so they stopped there and worked in the mine for a while. My great-grandmother ran a boarding house and took in miners. He later came into California --in 1862 -- and settled on the present-day ranch. When he arrived in the area, it had been a dry year and the vegetation around Dixon wasn't that high and the water was harder to get because you had to dig deeper to get it. When he got down to where the present ranch is, there was lower ground. The ground was wet and the oats were high--as he said, "As high as the backs of oxen." On the homestead here, there happened to be a natural spring and they decided to settle where the natural spring was. He went back and brought his family down and built a squatter's cabin and lived in that until they built a small house. He purchased the land from the Land Bureau in San Francisco for a dollar and a half an acre. I don't know why he didn't take the homestead act, but he didn't. He still had to live on it the same as he did for a homestead.

Years later, they built a small home consisting of one large room. They partitioned it off and had a loft above where the children slept. As they progressed, they had porches built around that they sealed in and thus they got a small home.

In 1883 or '82, they built a two-story addition to the house which consists of eight rooms. My grandmother paid for the building of the house by shipping eggs and butter from Elmira to San Francisco. She also had a millinery shop in Elmira. When Elmira burned, she didn't rebuild her shop. She built a room on her present home and did her millinery work there, as well as taking care of her other duties.

Two of the girls, my grandmothr and her sister, attended Napa College. The college moved from Napa to Berkeley and from Berkeley to Stockton. It's now called the College of the Pacific (U.O.P., University of the Pacific). My grandmother graduated from there with a degree in Music and her sister took a degree in Art.

When my great-grandmother passed away, she and my grandfather had accumulated 640 acres of land.

My grandmother's sister married a man by the name of Reddick who used to live over on Pedrick Road. His family moved from there to Lompoc and lived out on the coast. They had a ranch out there. They bought eighty acres in Lompoc Valley. He happened to be the first to grow flower seeds in the local valley, marigold seeds for Mendocino.

In 1906 my great-grandfather retired and my grandfather Zimmerman and my grandmother took over the ranch. My grandfather was born in 1853 in Lansing, Michigan. He left home when he was about fourteen or fifteen and he ended up in Binghamton. When he was about fifteen years old he went to work for a blacksmith there by the name of Smith and learned the trade of blacksmithing.

He later went to work for Monte Currey and was foreman for Currey for nine years.

During the time he was foreman for Currey, he married my grandmother, in 1890. They had six children, five boys and a girl, who was my mother. When my grandfather left Currey, he purchased sixty acres of land on the east side of Vaca Valley and planted a fruit orchard. It's just above what they used to call Buck Town in the Vaca Valley.

While he was running the fruit orchard, he also had a blacksmith shop and took in some blacksmithing work. Then he farmed some dry land farming on Sievers Road. Then in 1906 he moved over to the home ranch and started farming that when my great-grandfather retired.

He did his blacksmithing work here on the ranch as well. At the time of his death, he was farming approximately 1200 acres of dry land farming and some livestock. During the time he farmed he had his own teams and a combine, but during harvest time he needed more teams for the harvester, so he and old Jake Rohwer used to go together and furnish enough mules to run the harvester. Some of the Rohwer boys worked on the machine during the harvest season.

My father came to this county. He was born and raised in Sutter City. He worked in several of the western states until he came here to Dixon when he was about 20 years old. He went to work for the Dally family in Elmira and worked with them during the haying and harvest season. In the fall, he went to work for Steve Parker. The following year Steve Parker decided to open a grocery store in Oakland, so he hired my father to run the ranch which was about 900 acres at the time.

During the time that he was working for Steve Parker he married my mother, in 1915. Four children -- two olders sisters, myself and a younger sister -- were born to them. In 1930 my mother and father purchased a ranch from The Bank of Dixon. My father died in '32 and my mother and I finished paying for the ranch. Mother passed away at 83 years old. She had spent the greater part of her life in our home here that my great-grandparents built.

In 1968, my wife and I purchased the home quarter plus another eighty acres from mother, so at the present day we own the original quarter section that was settled on, plus other ground that they accumulated. It would be I think that's about all I have on the family.

They formed a company which consisted of 26 charter members.

The Sacramento Northern had a line that ran from Oakland up to Marysville, East of Binghampton and west of Maine Prairie. In 1910 they had an idea to put a branch line from Dozier station, (which is about 12 miles south of Dixon on 113) up to Dixon. They built a railroad that came from there to the present cemetery in Dixon. It came around the west side of the cemetery and ended up where the present day post office is. That didn't run too many years. They ran two or three trains a day up and down there. They carried mail and took passengers down to the junction to meet trains going to Oakland or to Sacramento. It wasn't a very paying thing, so it eventually was just abandoned.

During the early days they made their own bricks south on 113 by Brown Road. The method of building the bricks follows: There was a yellow clay pit ----. They would dig a pit and salvage the clay that was usable for bricks from the pit. Then they'd put a fire in the bottom of the pit to get a big bunch of charcoal. They eventually would put a layer of dirt over that. Then they'd place a layer of bricks and a layer of dirt, a layer of bricks and a layer of dirt, until they had about three layers of bricks. They would cover the mound over. Most of the bricks were soft bricks. That method wasn't very consistent. You'd get glass bricks, warped bricks and things depending on how much heat they got. Most of the foundations in fireplaces and things in the immediate area were built out of brick from that particular place.

In 1912 the community of Maine Prairie decided to build a telephone system, because the Bell System wanted a heavy amount of money to put branch lines out here to the farmers. They formed a company which consisted of 26 charter members. It had eight circuits and the company operated from 1912 to 1974 when everybody went into the Bell System. The line consisted of a main trunk line that went east from the old Timm place on East A Street, south on Pedrick Road until it hit Maine Prairie Road and east to Robben Road and south again until it got down to Jepson Road.

Prior to the time that they organized the original Maine Prairie (system) they had a barbed wire system that ran up 113. It didn't prove out too well. There was a flat wire (galvanized wire) put in over the tops of the gates. The

Lehe family owned the electric power distribution system (later they sold out to P.G. & E.). Lehe put up an electric line down 113 which consisted of just one power line. During the damp air the electricity would go in the ground and so the telephone line was charged. So, they abandoned that and then formed this other company in 1912.

Quite a lot of shipping was done on the Sacramento Northern which was used quite a bit by people who wanted to go to Oakland or Sacramento or up to Marysvillle. I know our folks went to Sacramento once a year. They'd lay in a supply of groceries for winter. What they purchased at a wholesale store was shipped on the Sacramento Northern to Vale Station, not too far from where we lived. We'd pick up the stuff there and haul it home. In those days, it would take you three or four hours to make the trip.

We organized and dug our own canal.

In 1960 a group got together and formed what was called the Maine Prairie Water District. That was the last time this area had been farmed in dry-land farming and livestock. The land had been rotated because it was not that rich. We'd plant a crop of grain and then we'd let the land stay idle for two or three years and pasture sheep and cattle on it. With the building of Monticello Dam, there was waste water coming down from Solano Irrigation District through our area and we decided we could use that water to our advantage. We organized and dug our own canal. First, we drained the land by digging a series of drainage ditches that the farmers had put in themselves. Then we got the idea of putting irrigation water on the land. It didn't work out for us money-wise to build a gravity flow system, pumping uphill from the slough. We worked a deal with Solano Irrigation District to purchase their surplus of drain water and we brought it down to our existing drain ditches. Each farmer would pump the water from the ditch onto his land. This worked out well. The district consists now of about 15,000 acres. The original people who organized the district and served as the first board of directors were Arthur Brown, Gibbon Horrigan Jr., Elwood Parker, Jack Parker and myself. I still serve as the chairman of the board of Maine Prairie Water District (1989).

I was asked to find out about the type of equipment we used to farm with over the years. We started out with

The first big tractors we had were Caterpillar tractors. My Uncle did have a one-cycle wheel tractor put out by International Harvester Company that he used to use for stationary work. It wasn't too good for farm work. It was good for stationary, belt work. Things like that. As far as other things, it wasn't that practical.

The big tractors were sixty horsepower tractors. The only small wheel tractor we had at the time was one built by Ford Motor Company. They called it the Fordson. We had one of each on the ranch here. The sixty Holt was built in Stockton and a man by the name of Best built one similar to the Holt. In later years they consolidated and became what is commonly known today as the Caterpillar Corporation.

The harvesters that were built at that time were built in Stockton. Best built a harvester, and so did both Holt and Harris. They were all wooden machines. In later years, all of them except Harris moved to the Midwest and manufactured there and shipped back to the west coast. Over the years the tractors and other equipment have changed to the point that they're more or less the same as what we see today working the farms.

RECLAMATION DISTRICT 2068

By Olin Timm

My first knowledge of Reclamation District 2068 occurred when Mr. Fred Dunnicliff, editor of the Dixon Tribune, took his wife and my mother and me on a drive to see the enormous drag lines digging a canal north from Haas Slough. This was in the late twenties, and the big ditch was the beginning of a canal system designed to irrigate 15,000 acres with Sacramento River water. These 15,000 acres were located just west of the Yolo by-pass of the Sacramento River.

Time passed and my next encounter with the area was in 1939 when I was seeking summer grain stubble for my newly purchased band of sheep. The structures for 2068 had been completed eight years before but, except for a few hundred acres of Dixon Ridge soil, none of the rest of the District was being irrigated. The beet camp on Liberty Island Road was abandoned; the Mills estate had also abandoned the scheme of raising alfalfa and shipping the bales by bay barge to Millbrae Dairy south of San Francisco. I rented 1600 acres of grain barley stubble. This 1600 acres was in default for failure to pay taxes and assessments. The property had been owned by Cutler Paige of San Francisco, who was a former Chairman of the 2068 Board of Trustees. This is the same property that four years later my Uncle Bob Bowen and I bid on: (320 acres), on the Fairfield courthouse steps. That day there were 1,100 acres of delinquent property for sale. Why this interest in purchasing land in an almost defunct irrigation district? The answer--a new crop, ladino clover, grown for the purpose of fattening livestock.

The Reclamation Board moved to purchase the assets of the East Dixon Irrigation and Drainage Plan for $21,050.

Several years later I became a Trustee of Reclamation District 2068 and an active member in rebuilding the District. It is because of this interest that I am developing the story of 2068. Everett Whiting, a present trustee, persuaded his reluctant wife, Elva, to assist me by copying District records. She did, in time, become an ardent amanuensis, and the following history could not have been written without her help.

On April 7, 1924, a group of landowners petitioned the Solano County Board of Supervisors for the formation of a Reclamation District. Of these petitioners, well over 80 percent were investors from "out of town," mostly from San Francisco. Crocker, Mills, Kate Winship, Santana, Cutler Paige, Ramsdale Stowe and Marks, and Nunes together owned 9370 of the 15,000 acres contained in the application. The petition was approved, and at the first meeting of the District on July 22, J. W. Preston was elected President and Felix Swan was appointed manager with a salary of $300 per month and C. Houston, attorney, at a salary of $250 a month.

On October 6, the Reclamation Board moved to purchase the assets of the East Dixon Irrigation and Drainage Plan for $21,050. The assets consisted of (1) maps, plans and surveys, (2) water rights under application for unappropriated water of the State of California for agricultural purposes. Except for engineering costs of $990 the balance of the $21,050 was paid to Felix Swan for promotion expenses.

The landowners of the District chose to form their irrigation system under State Reclamation law, rather than Irrigation District law because of the voting rules. Under Irrigation law, only residents within the boundaries of the district are eligible to vote. Under Reclamation District law, voting is by assessed valuation of parcels owned and voting may be cumulative. Owners may vote for all candidates or may cast all their assessed valuation on one candidate. Since the large majority of landowners in the district were absentee, the Reclamation Law was an obvious choice. Even if the District had been formed under Irrigation District law, there would have been the question of how many residents could vote. On the 1600 acres of the Cutler Paige property there was one structure, occupied only when Sam Silvey was operating his still.

On February 27, 1925, engineer F. C. Herman submitted the plan for 2068 to the State Reclamation Board. These plans were approved and the Board opened the project for bids which were finally let to the successful bidders, Haas F. Dougherty, who started construction in October.

To pay for this construction the Trustees called an

election for June 28, 1926, for the issuance of bonds in the amount of $550,000 with interest at 6%, and on October 18 the Solano County Treasurer was directed to sell the bonds. But it was not until December 30, 1927, 14 months later that the bonds were sold to American Mercantile for an amount left blank in the minutes. The fact that the amount was undisclosed leads one to believe that the price was below par and less than the $550,000.

By May 1928, it was realized the revenue from the bonds was not sufficient and there would need to be a new assessment. This time assessments were made directly to owners; another bond issue was not attempted. At the November 3 meeting warrants which were unpaid were extended, and on June 28, 1929, Trustees J. P. Thomsen and Felix Swan moved that all warrants due within ninety days be extended for four years. During this time, special assessments on the land were being made to complete construction. A monthly four-year extension of warrants began on February 28, 1930.

"Dixon Ridge" soils which were classified as silty clay loam

Finally, on July 5, 1930, a PG&E bill in the amount of $1653 was presented, indicating some water was being pumped for irrigation. During the period from 1930 to 1939, various irrigated crops, including beets and alfalfa, were tried and abandoned. The monthly PG&E bill in the summer of 1939 ran from $340 to $380. The farming in the district reverted to the type it had been before the district was formed, growing barley.

The chief reason for the inability of the farmers to grow the row crops and alfalfa was the state of the existing knowledge of handling clay soils. The soil particles which make up clay are called colloids. (The word is derived from Greek words meaning "like glue.") When water is applied to clay soils much of the moisture is bonded with the colloids, much as the water added to dehydrated limestone (cement) bonds itself into a solid structure. Thus, when moist clay is manipulated into a seedbed, much of the moisture is bound together with the clay particles and becomes unavailable for sprouting seeds. Unlike cement, however, the water bound together with the colloidal particles eventually is released and large cracks develop in the "adobe" soil.

On the "Dixon Ridge" soils, which were classified as silty clay loam, there is much less loss of available moisture than in strictly clay soils. This allowed farmers to manipulate the soil, hopefully between spring rains, and then plant the seeds into moisture, or , failing rains, to irrigate flat strip checks, then work the ground and still plant into moisture.

The modern technique of rounded seed beds with furrows allows the seed to be planted in dry ground and, subsequently, given moisture by running water down furrows. The water seeps into the beds from below, sprouting seeds.

Clay soil presents another problem to plants with deep roots, such as alfalfa. The tightly bound particles do not allow deep penetration of the roots and yields are consequently less. So the original attempts at farming failed.

But in the latter part of the '30s an increasing number of irrigation acres were being developed for pasture. One plant suitable for sheep was ladino clover. Many of the feeder lambs purchased by the Howard Vaughn-Brown partnership were being pastured in the Turlock area. Some thought that Reclamation District 2068 might be developed into a similar pasture area. However, the financial condition of the District was so poor that no operator was willing to undertake the burden of unpaid assessments as well as the risk of an untried crop. By August 1939, the calls to repay the $550,000 bonds had totaled $205,000 and of these calls only $26,000 had been paid.

It was at the August 4 meeting that the trustee J.W. Preston, Jr., H. Dillon Winship and Felix Swan voted for a refunding bond election in the amount of $160,000 to replace the $524,000 bond outstanding.

On September 15, the landowners of the District voted to issue the $162,000 refinancing bonds. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which was established during the Hoover administration to revitalize failed business, purchased these bonds and the $550,000 original issue was canceled. It is my understanding, from a conversation with Dillon Winship, that the R.F.C. paid off the original bond holders. Also, the R.F.C. insisted that Felix Swan be removed as trustee and manager of the District, but it was not until a year later that James E. Wiggins was elected secretary and manager. On October 15, 1940, Jim Wiggins was hired at a salary of $160 a month. He was also hired by Mills and Winship to manage their properties. In all the years after his removal, Felix Swan never missed a board meeting. He continually critized the Board actions, accusing them of discriminating in a failure to deliver water.

Other board changes occured at the same October 1940 meeting. Dillon Winship was elected President, Angus

Madden replaced Preston who had died, and C.D. O'Sullivan, representing the Mills Estate, had replaced Felix Swan. Also, the Houston law firm was relieved of its duties and was replaced by Sinclair Dobbins at a fee of $50 a meeting.

By this time, there were several thousand acres which had reverted to the District and Solano County because of failure to pay district assessments and county taxes. In November of 1940 the trustees instructed Wiggins to start negotiating with the Supervisors for what monies they expected to recover from these lands. Finally, in January 1942, the Supervisors accepted 10% of delinquent county taxes. This same month the Trustees started their first advertising of delinquent tracts.

All of these problems were aggravated by low tides in June

The first sale of 337 acres was to William and Nancy Campbell for $10 an acre in February. Also, in February, the board authorized the Secretary to pay 50 cents an acre to quitclaim the Cutler Paige 1600 acres. Then, in September, M.T. Bettencourt purchased 150 acres, also at $10 per acre. Another tax sale was in early 1943, also for $10 per acre. This was the balance of the Cutler Paige property and included Section 9 which was sold to Voice of America, U.S. Government. It was at this last sale that my uncle and I purchased 320 acres. William and Nancy Campbell were the other purchasers. The amount owed to the county was $43 to $46 an acre. 10% of this amount resulted in $4.30 to $4.60 per acre. The balance went to the District. The amount owed to the county for Bowen-Timm property was $4.30 per acre. Multiplying by 10 made $43 per acre in back taxes owed the county. The balance ($5.70) went to the District.

Felix Swan was always in attendance whenever sales were made on the courthouse steps. He had opposed this last sale because of a wildcat well being drilled in the district. Since all of these sales were negotiated ahead of time so that the County and District could be sure of buyers at the time of bidding, the trustees on this sale chose to sell the land with mineral rights except for section nine. In negotiating the section 9 sale, the Voice of America agreed to purchase the property without mineral rights. Later, Swan claimed that the advertising for this sale was illegally misleading and eventually persuaded a lawyer landholder, Mr. Breu, to examine the sale. Breu found that the sales were legal.

All of these purchasers of District land, those who purchased tax delinquent land as well as those like Howard Vaughn who bought the Nunes property, did so with the plan to develop irrigated pasture. In the spring of 1942, Mr. Gulley, who had farmed in the Turlock Irrigation District, planted ladino clover on the Ramsdale Stowe and Marks property. Also, in 1941, the District leased tract 52 to Gulley, first to plant barley and, subsequently, in 1942, ladino clover.

Bill Campbell began seeding the land he purchased immediately. Instead of leveling, he contoured his grounds to flood each elevation. After flooding one contour, he would then pull the gates and let the water flow into the next lower contour. At the last contour, the gate was pulled and the water went into the drain. Others leveled their ground and irrigated down the field in strip check with much less waste of water. The rush into ladino and, subsequently, trefoil was on.

As more and more acreage was put under irrigation, inadequacies in the system became apparent. There were three pumping lifts to the plan. Pump One took water from a channel dug from Haas Slough. Pump Two raised the water again and from this elevation distribution ditches carried water to the south and lower part of the district.

The next lifts were at pumping stations Three and Four. These lifts were built to provide water for the northern parts of the district.

The strains in the system were several. The channel between Haas Slough and Pump One had obstructions. Spots where the digging was tough had not been thoroughly dredged. And the pumps at Station One proved to be inadequate. Eventually, these obstructions were dredged. Also, the area designed for Pump Two to handle was too large and at Pump Three the catch or surge basins were too small and of insufficient height.

All of these problems were aggravated by low tides in June which reduced the amount of water at Pump One. A strong north wind would pile up a foot of water at Pump One. This would increase the lift necessary to move water from One to Two. Any increase of lift reduces pumping capacity.

The strain on Pump Two was handled first by taking water by gravity out of the canal between One and Two and running it in the drainage ditch along to Liberty Island Road and then lifting the water out of the drainage ditch into

the distribution ditches. This procedure relieved Pump Two of one thousand acres.

Subsequently, as more areas were irrigated, drain water was captured and lifted into the canal between Pumping Stations One and Two. The use of drain water when it was available became a technique for watering all the peripheral parcels of the District. Before this policy was adopted, however, our drainage water was tested for injurious salts.

Another one of the problems was the dilapidated condition of the trash racks in front of the pumping stations. These were repaired eventually, but before this was done the District's electrician, Hugh Orrick, would use his diving bell helmet to go down and remove obstructions. Fortunately for the District, Hugh had worked on pumps drawing water from the Sacramento River and had used a bell when sturgeon were sucked into pump impellers. In 1946, Angus Madden resigned as Trustee of 2068 and I was appointed in his place. Serving on the Board started a new learning experience for me. Not only did I learn the intricacies of an irrigation district, but the association with Dillon Winship and Antonio "Tory" Torriggino was like a course in continuing education.

Dillon owned the Georgia Fast Express, similar to U.P.S., but had been brought to San Francisco to manage the Kate Winship Estate. He dealt with people in much larger negotiations than I had ever experienced. I watched him handle our agreement with the navy as they acquired District property for the Navy Radio Station. Dillon continually used Georgian aphorisms, such as: "That outfit's so poor, it's got no pot to pee in or window to throw it out of."

Tory was the son of a North Beach grocery man who finally was persuaded by A.P. Giannini to put his money in the Bank of Italy instead of in a pit below the store. Tory graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, as a civil engineer and started working for Ogden Mills. He was engineer for their Etna Power Company and frequently accompanied Mills to their hydraulic generating plants. When O'Sullivan was called into the Army during World War II, Tory managed all the Mills Estate properties, including the Mills Building in San Francisco. Tory performed all the engineering tasks of the District without charge. He redesigned the pumping plant and siphon discharge at the south end of the District. As more land was irrigated and drains were cleaned, the south end received more drainage water. The situation did not become serious until the level of the water in the bypass on the other side of the levee became higher than our drainage pipe with a flap gate. As a result of continuous complaints by the southern landowner, Glen Bowlsby, and because he was right in complaining that the size of the drain pump was inadequate, the Board finally installed a larger pump with the siphon designed by Tory.

Both Dillon and Tory were intensely interested in developing the District

Tory and I frequently met for lunch in San Francisco. Once in his office I talked to him about converting some silos to grain elevators. He commented that to handle those feeds you have to know the angle of repose. I asked what was the angle of repose, and he replied: "You need to understand the slopes at which these grains will flow. I'll engineer it for you." As he bent over his drawing board, I hesitated. He turned from his stool and drawing board and said: "Olin, it won't cost you anything."

Both Dillon and Tory were intensely interested in developing the District into an efficient operation, and they treated our problems as the most important projects in their lives. In 1950, Dillon resigned as Chairman. He remained a Trustee, but turned the Chairmanship over to me.

After the original planting of clover proved a success, more and more acreage was put into irrigated pasture. In 1944, clover acreage kept increasing until by the middle of 1955 almost the entire acreage of the district's 13,500 acres was in pasture. By the late 50's, the District was feeding more lambs than any other area in the U.S. It was not until the latter part of the 60's that row crops began being grown in the District.

It was in the successive seasons 1983-84 to 1985-86 that the original pumps on the main canal were replaced. These were the Byron Jackson pumps that were installed in 1927, which had essentially lain idle 34 years.

Now the District sits with rebuilt facilities and two million dollars in the bank as reserves. The two million has developed from royalties received from section nine. The District now receives $100,000 a year from interest on the two million - quite a change from the four year postponements of warrants issued in the 1930's.