

SYLVAN RECOLLECTIONS

By

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EARLY SYLVAN

A little more than a dozen miles northeast of Sacramento, out on the old Auburn road, there grew up in the 1850's a large rural community, that for the past four score years has been known as Sylvan. This community had for its beginning and for the center of its development a group of public houses, five in number, from the Fourteen Mile House to the Eighteen, inclusive.

These Houses, approximately a mile apart, were links in a chain of hotels connecting Sacramento and Auburn, and were built primarily for the accommodation of teamsters who hauled freight to the mines.

Sylvan District is in the northern part of Sacramento County, in Center Township. It lies adjacent to the foothills, and with its rolling acres, well covered with oak timber, its healthful climate, and its proximity to seekers, and by the end of the 50's there were perhaps twenty families in the settlement. And by the time twenty families had moved in, the greater part of the available land in that immediate vicinity had been taken up. Center Township was mostly occupied by land grants, the San Juan and the Norris grants, so our original Sylvan settlement had rather definite boundaries. Placer County was on the north and northeast, the County line crossing the Roseville road hardly more than a mile north of the Sylvan school house. The San Juan grant lay south of the Greenback Lane, and the large holding of Samuel Norris was a barrier on the west, the grant line crossing the Auburn road a mile west of the Fourteen Mile House.

The men that settled at Sylvan were young, most of them were married, and some of them had small families. A few had arrived in California by water, but the majority had come the covered wagon route, bringing with them their families and their household goods. As a rule each family settled on a quarter section of Government land, built a house and a barn, dug a well and set about clearing the land.

As I have said, those early wells at Sylvan were dug, not bored. They were perhaps four feet across. The depth varied. Some were seventy feet.

In the earliest days, water was drawn by hand. Two small wooden buckets were used, a long rope and a pulley. Then horse power came into use, large wooden buckets and a whim. In due time came windmills which in turn have been supplanted by more modern means of drawing water from wells.

Meanwhile the business of hauling freight from Sacramento to the mines went on, and this was so profitable that some of the early settlers, when time could be spared from their land, did more or less hauling.

I have not been able to learn the exact year in which the public houses on the Auburn road were established. In a history of Sacramento County, I found "Most of the road houses were built in 1850, and were abandoned after the completion of the Sacramento Valley Railroad to Folsom in 1856." No doubt that is true of the hotels on the Folsom road, because after the completion of that road, the first railroad ever built in California, hauling by team from Sacramento to Folsom was no longer necessary; but for many years after 1856 freight hauling over the Auburn road continues and the public houses on that road continued to operate.

It has been suggested that at least some of the hotels between Sacramento and Auburn may have been built on the Atlantic coast, where material and labor were relatively cheap, brought around the Horn to California in sailing vessels, hauled to their destination and there assembled. This may be true. It is true of some of California's early houses, but I have not found any written authority to support that supposition.

Nor do I know certainly the names of the first landlords of these Inns. When my parents, John F. and Sarah J Cross, settled in that neighborhood in 1859, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Gray were living at the Fourteen Mile House, but they were not the first owners. Mr. William Thomas, who had crossed the plains from his native State of Ohio was an early, and perhaps the earliest proprietor of the Fifteen Mile House. When teaming on the Auburn road was discontinued, Mr. Thomas sold his Sylvan property and moved to Roseville, where he opened a General Merchandise store. He remained in Roseville and in that business until his death in 1895, at the age of seventy-five years.

At the Sixteen Mile House Mr. Heaton was an early proprietor, later, Mr. Jeremiah Givens. Mr. and Mrs. Neff, who with a large family of sons and daughters, had come overland to California, lived at the Seventeen.

The Eighteen Mile House, known as the Half-Way, because it was midway between Sacramento and Auburn, was established prior to May 10, 1851, for I think it was on that date there appeared in the Sacramento Daily Union this advertisement: "On the Auburn road, 18 miles above this city, convenient and excellent house of entertainment. Frank Brown, gentlemanly proprietor." Again, in that same year it is referred to as the "Half-Way".

In the Daily Union of May 13, 1852 this appeared: "We learn that Messrs. Rosecrans and Cutts, proprietors of the first line of stages between Sacramento, Ophir and Auburn have sold their interest to Frank Brown Esq. the popular host of the Half-Way House, and Mr. Parish."

I know little of the subsequent history of the Eighteen. Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Ross lived there in the late seventies.

The Auburn road across the Norris grant that was in use in the 50's and the 60's was a little distance north of the present highway. After coming out through North Sacramento, instead of turning south toward the Southern Pacific railroad track, the old road continued straight ahead, crossing the Arcade Creek a mile or more below the present crossing at Del Paso Park.

Along the twelve miles of Auburn road that crossed the Norris grant, from the American River bridge to our community, there were a few public houses, but as they were on a private land grant, no permanent settlements grew up around them, and they were abandoned when freight hauling by team was at an end.

Only one of these Inns is given any prominence in the above-mentioned history of Sacramento County, and that is the Oak Grove House. It was located in a beautiful grove of live oaks, seven or eight miles from Sacramento. Patrons easily could make the round trip in a day, and the Oak Grove House was a favorite resort in 1851 and '52.

It was here, a short distance from this road house, on August 2, 1852, that one of California's famous duels was fought. The combatants were Edward Gilbert and James W. Denver, both prominent young men in our young State. Gilbert had come to California from New York in 1847 with Stevenson's regiment. He was editor of the Alta California, and in his paper he had criticized Denver's management of supplies for overland immigration. A newspaper controversy followed this criticism, which led to Gilbert's challenging Denver to a duel. Denver accepted, rifles were chosen, and Gilbert was killed instantly. He was but thirty years of age at the time of his death. He had been on the elected delegates that framed the Constitution of California, and was elected to Congress in 1850, being "the first man to take a seat in Congress from the Pacific Coast."

Denver in 1854 was nominated for Congress, but was defeated. That same year he was appointed Secretary of State by Governor Bigler. He resigned in 1856. During the Civil War he fought for the Union and became a Brigadier General of Volunteers. He was afterward Governor of Kansas, and also had the honor of having Colorado's capital named for him.

It is long years since anything was left to mark the places where the public houses on the Norris grant stood, but the children of the Sylvan pioneers can recall the ruins of at least one of them, the Twelve Mile House.

The above detail is given that the site of this original Mile House need not be confused with that of a building a half mile farther east on the Auburn road that was erected in the late '70's or in the '80's, and was also named the Twelve Mile House.

So far as I know, there never was a Thirteen Mile House on the Auburn road. Was it because of the superstition that probably dates back to the crucifixion when Christ and his twelve disciples had broken break together at the Last Supper?

A half mile east of the junction of the Auburn road and the Greenback Lane, there is one more bridge over the Arcade creek. At the west end of this bridge, on the south side of the road, stood the Fourteen Mile House. Mr. Guy Van Maren's home occupies almost the exact spot.

Mrs. Emma Lewis Coleman's home stands where the Fifteen stood.

No building now marks the site of the old Sixteen, nor of the Eighteen.

Mr. and Mrs. Scott live where the Seventeen used to be.

The five road houses at Sylvan were much alike. They all stood on the south side of the road, with the long barns directly across from them. The houses were two story, covered with clapboards, and they stood lengthwise to the road and very close to it. I think they were all originally painted a dark red. From the long porch across the front, two doors opened. One led into the Lady's Parlor and the other into the bar room.

Back of the bar room there was a large dining room, and back of that the kitchen. There were sleeping accommodations upstairs, but the teamsters generally preferred to sleep in the open, near their teams and their loads.

The carriers of freight were of various kinds. About every known vehicle was in use, from one drawn by a single yoke of oxen, to others requiring sixteen or twenty horses or mules. Some of the wagons had a "back action", that is, a trailer, a second wagon attached to the first, both drawn by the same team. Many of the big freight wagons were called prairie schooners, having followed the immigrant trail across the plains. These are museum pieces now.

We Sylvan children who lived down the road from the schoolhouse and who daily passed the old Fifteen, can recall Sylvan's last prairie schooner. It was a pathetic figure, even to a child. Long after teaming days were over it stood alone in what had been the barnyard of the Inn. Season after season took its toll. Its paint grew paler, the wheels sank a little deeper, the wide tires rusted and fell away. Its disintegration was so gradual, lasting over so long a time, that no one could say of any one day, "This date marks the passing of that old prairie schooner."

The freight wagons were mostly painted a dark red, that paint being both inexpensive and durable. The wagon beds were deep. Up on the front end there was a jockey box, in which small tools were carried. On the side of the wagon there was a long box for larger tools. Teamsters had to be prepared for emergencies that might arise far from a blacksmith shop. Heavy canvas covers protected the loads from dust and changing weather.

As it was necessary on the narrow, winding mountain road for one traveler to warn of the approach of another, it was customary for some of the horses in a team to wear bells. These bells were fastened to a bar above the harness, and their musical tinkling could be heard long distances, answering the same purpose as do the honking horns of automobiles today. Drivers often rode the wheel horse on the brake side and drove with a jerk line, that is, one rein that reached from one of the lead horses back to the driver.

The old Auburn road continued and still continues in a north easterly direction above Sylvan corners. A little above the site of the Half-Way, the road crosses the Placer County line, and climbs into the foothills, where the oaks of the valley reluctantly give way to the pine and chaparral.

California's early roads were dirt and little work was done on them. They were neither wide nor straight nor level nor smooth. The heavy wheels of the freight wagons cut deep into them. Dust in summer and mud in winter were equally deep.

In time, branch roads were opened from the main thoroughfare. I think the Roseville road, now part of the Lincoln highway, was the first branch. In the later 1860's some of the farmers whose land lay south of the Auburn road, but did not touch it, petitioned the county for a public road. The petition was granted, and the Greenback Lane was opened. The settlers who sold to the county this land for a road were paid in greenbacks. This was after the Civil War and a dollar greenback was not worth a hundred cents. The farmers naturally preferred gold, but as the paper was legal tender they had to accept it. This road has always been known as the Greenback Lane.

Farming was on a small scale in the fifties. Land had to be cleared before anything could be planted, and it was not easy to hire help, as most of the footloose men were hoping to strike it rich in the mines. But with the passing of time, children grew old enough to be helpful, some of the miners gave up prospecting, there was more immigration, and in the sixties, farming had made a start at Sylvan.

In 1862 need for a school arose in the settlement. Mr. William Thomas, proprietor of the Fifteen Mile House, took the initiative and learned that enough money could be raised to build a schoolhouse. He gave the site for the building, and when the district was formed it was Mr. Thomas who gave it its name, Sylvan, a most appropriate one, as the five acres were well covered with oaks. At that time, it was necessary for the settlers to support a private school for a few months before they were entitled to public funds. Mrs. Sarah J. Cross, who had been a teacher in her native State of Maine, was asked to teach this private school and she was glad to do so. She went before the Sacramento County Board of Education and obtained a certificate to teach. This certificate was dated July 5, 1862, and was signed by the three members, Dr. F. W. Hatch, J. W. Anderson and M. L. Templeton.

Mrs. Cross used a cabin in her dooryard for a school room, and had about twenty pupils, all the children of school age in the neighborhood. The last survivor of that little school was Mrs. Katherine Johnson Scott, whose death occurred in 1932, on her farm near Orangevale.

The dwelling in the yard of which the school cabin stood, was nearly a mile west from the Sylvan schoolhouse, and about the same distance north of the Auburn road. It was built in 1859, and stood until the summer of 1928, when it was destroyed by fire, presumably started by a match or a cigarette, dropped from a passing airplane. A newspaper that mentioned the

fire at the time, said the building destroyed was Sylvan's first schoolhouse, and that valuable records were lost in the fire. That was a mistake. The building that burned had not been used for the schoolroom. No one was living in the house at the time of the fire, and there were no valuable papers in it.

In the summer of 1862, Mr. John F. Cross, who had followed the trade of a carpenter, was given the work of building the schoolhouse. I think he was assisted by some of the other men in the neighborhood.

Before the end of the year, the building was finished, and with winter coming on, a stove was needed. A dance was held to raise money for that purpose. This dancing party was the first function held in the new schoolhouse. With the proceeds a big cast iron stove was purchased, and it was in use for several decades.

The first Sylvan schoolhouse consisted of one large room and two hat halls. It was clapboarded, painted a light color and it faced the south. It had two doors, and its windows, three on each side and two in the north end, were supplied with green slat shutters.

The original desks, double ones, were homemade and painted a blue-gray. Before they were replaced by modern ones, their ink-stained surfaces carried "many a jackknife's carved initials."

In the south end of the room, between the doors, there was a raised platform on which stood the teacher's desk. A long recitation bench was in front of this, and between the bench and the desk stood the stove. A blackboard extended around the room, except where it was interrupted by doors and windows. A big clock ticked high on the north wall, its pendulum swinging very slowly to and fro.

Large maps hung on the south wall above the door and the blackboards. Some of us Sylvan children did not know for a long time why east was west to us, an experience likely to be spared pupils who have studied from maps hung on a north wall, where "east is east, and west is west." In the southwest corner stood a bookcase.

When this "temple of learning" was built, an opening, little more than two feet square, was left in the ceiling near the north end of the room. As little children we did not choose to sit under that opening because a mischievous older boy had told us the attic was full of wildcats. We never had seen a wildcat; there were none in that part of the country; there was nothing whatever in that schoolhouse attic, but all that did not prevent our expecting a wildcat to jump at any time, without warning to a desk below.

An imaginary line was drawn through the school property from north to south, dividing it into two parts, nearly equal. The girls and boys were supposed to stay on their respective sides, but I recall no iron-clad rule requiring them to do so. The girls had "the east side, along which the Roseville road ran, and besides being the sunnier side of the schoolroom, it gave them the added advantage of seeing the occasional passerby.

School took in at nine and was dismissed at four. We had an hour from twelve to one for lunch and play; a morning recess from ten-forty to eleven, and another in the afternoon from two-forty to three. We were called in by a large hand bell.

In common with other country schools, Sylvan had pupils ranging from the primer class to High School, all in one room and all taught by one teacher.

Our school term was eight months. There was a Christmas vacation of a week or two, and by June first, school had closed for a long summer.

Sylvan was one of the first rural schools in Sacramento County, it was one of the largest, and has always been considered one of the best. As is to be expected in a community where the heads of the families are good, self-respecting citizens, those early Sylvan teachers had little trouble with discipline.

The teacher's monthly salary for years was seventy or seventy-five dollars. There was no paid janitor. Brooms were furnished by the district, and the larger girls more or less cheerfully did the sweeping. There was no remuneration for that work unless a word of commendation from the teacher might be considered so.

To the larger boys fell the work of carrying water. For years there was no well or other water supply on the school premises, and it had to be carried in large pails from the nearest well. Mr. John Aiston's house was less than a quarter of a mile from the school, and from there the pupils were supplied with drinking water. In the light of today that may not be a pleasant thought, but there were few illnesses among the Sylvan children, and certainly none that could be traced to those common drinking cups. We had two tin wash pans, and in each hat hall hung a common roller towel.

Children might go to school barefoot in warm weather but never bareheaded. The girls wore hood in the winter and sunbonnets in the summer. And hanging on the same hook with a sunbonnet was a dinner bucket. Never were they called lunch pails. Country people had dinner at noon, whether a hot meal at home or a cold one out of a tin pail. Lunch baskets were not in use in rural neighborhoods. Food in a basket dried quickly. A basket was not so durable, nor so easily kept sweet and clean, and, too, it would have been more of a temptation to the busy little ant and his large following.

Mothers did not have to think up ways to tempt our appetites. A peep into one of those roomy pails would have shown a good supply of sandwiches made of homemade bread, including the crusts, with plenty of homemade butter. Instead of dainty, prepared fillings, those sandwiches were of beef, mutton or pork, maybe chicken. Perhaps instead of meat we had hard boiled eggs or raw. Eating our midday meal in groups under the oaks, was one of the unforgettable joys of Sylvan school life. Sitting there on the ground, visiting, with our dinner buckets in our laps, how many times was an apple exchanged for a doughnut or a pickle for a piece of pie.

Few schools have so large or so fine a yard as Sylvan, and here we learned to play those games known to children all over the civilized world, handed down from one generation to another. We played ball and we flew kites. We played marbles and mumbly peg. We learned "London bridge is falling down" and King William was King James' son, "neither of which so far as I know, whetted our appetites for further knowledge of English history. We played "Black Man", "Drop the Handkerchief", anti-over and "Blind Man's Bluff". And the more running there was in the game the better we liked it, and, too, when we lived from one to three miles from the schoolhouse and always walked.

Sylvan children liked school. Not because we were all so ambitious to learn, but here was most of our social life. As was usual in farming districts, the schoolhouse was the civic, social and religious center. Here was the voting place, and where the men of the community met to talk over matters of neighborhood importance. Dancing parties were sometimes held. Some winters there was a Lyceum or a Debating Society, or a Spelling school. You must know that was a very long time before moving pictures or the radio, and people had to furnish their own entertainment.

Early in the history of the district a Mayday fete became an established institution; a Sunday school was organized, and church services were sometimes conducted in our schoolhouse, and I can recall at least one wedding.

Before we are dismissed from school let us take a peep into a desk. If a little Sylvan girl of the long ago had been asked what grade she was in, she would not have known what the questioner meant. She was in the First Reader or the Second or the Third, as the case might be. The Readers were McGuffy's; still dear to many of us, and there was one in every desk. There was a Speller and a copy book, a slate and a slate pencil. There were Arithmetics, Grammars, Histories and Geographies. If the pupil into whose desk we had looked happened to be one of the older girls or boys, we saw an Algebra, maybe a Philosophy, and perhaps a Physiology. It was during the rather early life of Sylvan that the study of Physiology was introduced into California schools. I recall having heard that an occasional parent objected to its being taught on the grounds that it was indecent. No doubt these objecting parents argued that if the Creator had intended that we should know aught of our stomach, our lungs or our liver, those organs would not have been so completely hidden.

Do you remember the copy books that were in use a half century and more ago? At the top of each page there was a precept in a beautifully Spencerian hand. It might be a bit of practiced advice from Benjamin Franklin, and after a child had painstakingly copied it on the several lines below, he had learned something worthwhile.

Before note books and scratch pads were into use, every pupil used a slate and pencil. Some of my readers may recall the time when a noise hating inventor laced a strip of red felt on the wooden frame of the Nation's slates.

Text books were purchased by the parents and the mothers invariably put calico covers on them. Thus they were kept cleaner to hand down to a sister or a brother.

Seldom were country children kept in after school, and school homework was unknown to the children of early Sylvan. Boys and girls, large and small, had homework of a different kind. They assumed little responsibilities, or had responsibilities put upon them, whereby they learned things not found in books. There were cows to be driven up from the pasture and milked; there were chickens to be fed; wood and water to be carried into the house, and eggs must be hunted. I say hunted and mean it because hens that ran at large as they did on farms, like to make their nests in out-of-the-way places, such as in a clump of tall grass or in the cool shadow of a grapevine, and one of the children's chores was to find these hiding places.

While my mother was Sylvan's first teacher, Mr. Alfred Spooner was the first to teach in the new house, and school opened there in January, 1863, the same month and year in which the Central Pacific Railroad Company broke ground in Sacramento for the first transcontinental railroad.

So far as I know, there were three teachers between 1863 and 1870, Alfred Spooner, Vital Bangs and Miss Celia Wilcox. Most of Sylvan's teachers were unmarried, but Mr. Bangs had a wife and child and they lived at the Fifteen.

For three years following 1870, Mr. Sam J. Pullen was our teacher. College graduates were not so numerous then as they are now, and Mr. Pullen was the first College man to teach at our school. During the three winters that he taught, the enrollment was greater than it had been before, and greater than it was to be for many years to come. It so happened that the oldest girls and boys in the district remained in school those winters, and many little children were old enough to make a start. I remember having heard that the daily attendance was in the neighborhood of sixty, which meant some work for one teacher.

Mr. Sam J. Pullen was the father of John Francis Pullen, who for ten years previous to his death on November 10, 1941, had been the Presiding Justice of our Third Appellate Court.

During the seven years following Mr. Pullen's acceptance of a position in the Roseville school, Sylvan had several teachers. Although there is no available record, the following list is quite accurate, according to the memory of a former pupil. Miss Mary Lynch was there in the Autumn of 1873, but she resigned because of ill health. She was followed by Mr. George Holton, who also remained but half a year. Then came Mr. Vernon Arrasmith, Miss Florence Smith, Mr. Louis Zastrow, W.L. Nutting, Mr. George Richards, Mr. Charles Davidson, and Mr. Samuel Jackman. The last two were College men, the latter a graduate of Dartmouth. Mr. Jackman was at one time Sacramento County Superintendent of schools, and only a few years ago died in Sacramento at the age of ninety-seven years.

In 1880, Mr. Julian Johnson, father of Mr. Fontaine Johnson, Sacramento attorney, came to the Sylvan school for a year or two, and he was followed by Mr. Eli Carothers, who remained for

several years. Later there came Miss Amelia Ingalls, Mr. Marton J. Congdon, Miss Delia Manning, and Lilian A. Cross. I have tried not to omit the names of any teachers who presided over the destinies of the Sylvan children from the opening of the school in '63, up to and into the nineties.

I have mentioned the large enrollment of pupils in the very early '70's. It was at about this time that parcels of land on the San Juan grant, south of our original settlement, were sold to newcomers, and the San Juan school was started. The congestion was further relieved by the organization of the Roberts school district, up on Greenback Lane, near the then new Orangevale colony.

As soon as the Sylvan pioneers began to clear the land, they had wood to sell. Sacramento became a ready market, and the chopping and hauling of wood became one of the early industries.

Farms needed fences, and while perhaps a few primitive brush one were to be seen, the farmer soon built of rails, split from oak trees. These were followed by board fences, which in turn, gave way to barbed wire. When rails or boards were used, a ditch must be dug along each side to keep cattle from getting a 'purchase' on a fence and breaking it. With barbed wire, ditches are no longer necessary. An occasional one may still be seen.

A history, however brief, of inventions and improvements in farming machinery in the last half of the 19th century from the time when a man walked up and down the length of a field behind a single plow, to the days of modern, motor-driven machinery, would be a long story and can be found elsewhere. Needless to say, those pioneer farmers were busy, working long days. Sacramento flouring mills became the marker for all the wheat that was raised, and hay and barley were mostly consumed at home.

If we were to follow one of those pioneer housewives, through the activities of a day, we must rise early. Before the children were old enough to be helpful, a mother's hands had everything to do, the cooking and cleaning, the washing and ironing, the sewing, and such sundries as chicken raising and flower gardening. Many a pioneer farmer, at Sylvan and elsewhere has owed his success, at least in part, to the fact that his helpmate was able to pay the grocery bill with 'butter and egg' money. If a member of the family were ill, the mother was the nurse, and she was never too busy to help a neighbor in time of trouble.

The cooking was done on cast iron stoves, and the fuel was oak wood. Besides the three hearty meals that must be prepared every day, the cook did all the baking for her family, the butter making and the fruit preserving.

Meat for breakfast was quite likely to be ham or bacon, home grown and home cured. Coffee was the breakfast beverage and it was purchased in the form of green berries. This green coffee was browned in the oven, then kept in a container with a tightly fitting cover, and just enough was ground at one time for one using. Many of you knew the coffee mill that was a necessary

part of every kitchen's equipment. Dinner at noon and supper were much alike, being hearty meals, planned to satisfy the hunger of hard working men. Everybody on those Sylvan farms worked. No one was poor and nobody on relief.

Monday was wash day. In the first years water was not piped into the houses and all the water used must be carried from the well in pails. There were no washing machines, there were no washing powders, and the common yellow soap of that time had to be helped very materially by what is commonly known as elbow grease.

When the clothes had been soaked and rubbed, boiled and rinsed, blued and starched, and wrung by hand after each of these processes, they were hung out to dry. But that clothes line bore little resemblance to a clothes line of this day. The strange looking, voluminous garments that billowed in the breeze a half century and more ago would hardly today be recognized as underwear. And unlike our gay, cheery prints, the calico house dresses our mothers wore, high of neck, and long of sleeve, were modest in color, and no doubt the material was warranted to wear long and well. Perhaps if every stitch of our clothes today had to be made by hand, we too, would see to it that a garment had good wearing qualities.

The stockings on that far off clothes line were white end of cotton. They were exposed to public gaze only when they graced the line on wash day. Every woman wore high shoes, and her dresses came well below the shoe top. This was not a custom peculiar to rural neighborhoods. No one wore short dresses at that time, and silk hose were not in use.

Tuesday was ironing day, and however warm the weather, there must be a hot fire in the stove on which to heat the several flat irons. Those long, wide, tucked and ruffled petticoats and those long, full dresses must be well ironed. Seldom did a Sylvan housewife give a garment a 'lick and a promise'.

After the washing and ironing were done and the clothes mended and put away, there was always plenty of work to fill the days. Bread had to be made several times a week, also butter, and in the big work basket there always was sewing to be done. Nearly everything those pioneer mothers and their children wore from the skin out, was made at home and made by hand. And many of them made their husband's shirts and underwear. In the late 60's there was an occasional small sewing machine that was screwed to the top of a table and operated by hand. In the 70's the larger machines, with pedals were in use, and they were certainly welcomed by women everywhere.

At first these neighbors were too busy to do much visiting, and before lighter vehicles came in in the late sixties and early seventies, they must walk or ride horseback or in a farm wagon. As time passed and the children grew and were of more help there was more time for the exchange of visits, but whether one of the mothers went to spend the day, or only a short afternoon, with another, she took some work, either knitting or crochet, perhaps pieces to make a patch. Just as women do everywhere, those mothers exchanged cooking recipes, dress

patterns, cuttings of plants and flower seeds. They all loved their flower gardens, and every home had one. The spading was usually done by some man on the place, but the planting and tending, the weeding and watering were all done by the women in the family. Water on a Sylvan ranch came from one well, and until some years of time had piped the water from the well to the garden, it had to be carried in pails.

How the fragrance of some particular flower, a violet, a sprig of mignonette, can carry us back to the garden when that fragrance first came to us. A bunch of sweet old fashioned blooms can start me on a pilgrimage on which the gardens that I knew in childhood become as little shrines.

Sylvan is especially beautiful in the Spring. It seems that it was more so when the Auburn road meandered in a leisurely fashion over one little rise after another, and the occupant of a horse drawn vehicle had time to look at the blue of the sky, the green of the budding oaks; to see the baby blue eyes peeping from the grass, to hear a meadow lark's sweet note from some far corner of a wheat field. The pastures were gay with buttercups and poppies, cream cups and johnny jump ups. And doubtless Sylvan has today the descendants of the birds we knew, the shy little linnnet that made friendly advances by building her nest in a vine that climbed over the house; the tiny, shimmering humming bird, poised in air, warily drawing a drop of sweetness from a bloom; the dove and the quail. Then there was the big flock of black birds on a newly plowed field; the convention of talkative crows in the top of an oak; the bold chicken hawk, the woodpecker and the saucy blue jay. And always gather crumbs in the schoolyard do I see the trim little magpie, and she scolds us soundly if plenty of crumbs are not forthcoming. And sometimes in the dusk of a summer evening I can hear again that loneliest of all lonely sounds, the lamenting voice of a mourning dove.

The community spirit seems to have been strong in early Sylvan. They, like other groups of pioneers, had much in common. They had broken home ties to come to California, and those homes and relatives were thousands of miles away, and they probably felt a need to be a part of something definite, to belong. If one fell ill the others did what they could. Death seldom came to the neighborhood those first years, but when it did come to one of those early homes, it was a neighbor that did all that was to be done.

Babies were born at home, and without benefit of a physician. Mrs. Mary Aiston, a wise, cheery little English woman, over a long period of years welcomed most of the Sylvan babies into the world.

Sunday was observed, not always by attendance at church, for some of the time there was no service near. There was no limit to the hours of work on a farm for six days in the week, and it was well that the seventh was observed as a day of rest. Often the rest meant a visit to a neighbor, perhaps to spend the day, or maybe to make an afternoon call. For a long time, Sunday was the only day the men could get together socially. By 1874, when a Grange was organized in Roseville, the farmers were having more leisure and many of them joined that Order.

Life at Sylvan was never monotonous. We, who as children have lived on a farm, know how interesting life is, especially in the Spring when there are so many young things, funny little wobbly legged colts and calves, playful baby pigs and dozens and dozens of downy chicks. Whatever the season, the days were filled to the brim and life was never lonely. There were the old harvest days, before a cook house was included in a Sylvan threshing machine outfit. It was a busy time for the farmers' wives when a crew of no less than a score of men came to spend two days or three, or maybe more, depending upon the size of the crop. Another especially busy time was in the Fall of the year, after the frost came, when farmers did their butchering. Several hogs were killed for winter use. There was lard to be tried out, hams and sides to be smoked, head cheese and sausage to be made, and a barrel of meat to be salted down.

Then came the holidays, those landmarks along the way. The last Thursday in November brought Thanksgiving. Then, as now, turkey was the favorite meat for holiday dinners, and turkeys were raised on nearly every Sylvan farm.

Christmas in that yesteryear of which I am thinking was celebrated much as it is today. Stocking were hung up on Christmas Eve and though Santa had a million homes to visit before daybreak he stopped to fill every little sock to the brim.

Maybe you recall the evergreen trees that were brought from the nearby foothills and set up in our living rooms. I can see one of them now, a pine, six feet tall. It is trimmed with festoons of popcorn, with here and there a brightly polished red apple, and to add more color, some oranges. You must know that oranges were a luxury then, before California grew her own. Hanging on the branches of the tree are small packages, while the larger and heavier ones are lying at the foot. Tiny wax candles light this tree and someone has to keep a watchful eye on them, lest, small as they are, they start a conflagration.

Although Christmas trees before the turn of the century were not so gayly decorated as are those of today, and although our gifts were not so beautifully wrapped, we did not feel any lack. The day was merry and so were the weeks that preceded it. We were busy preparing surprises for other members of the family, and by the time the great day arrived we were likely to be almost at a bursting point, so many secrets were we keeping.

And don't you remember how spicy the warm, cozy kitchen smelled while Christmas preparations were going forward? And maybe you recall how anxious we were to be of use, to pop the corn and string it, to crack nuts and seed raisins, to chop the ingredients that were going into the mincemeat.

Yes, we loved getting ready for Christmas, and no matter how joyful December twenty-fifth might be, the anticipation almost if not quite equaled the realization.

A New Year was generally welcomed by neighborhood gatherings. Sometimes it was a dancing party that watched the Old Year out.

And scattered through the year there were birthdays in every family that were made the occasions for more or less festivity.

There were other days that were rather outstanding, especially to the young people, such as St. Valentine's, when lacy little missives came to Sylvan young ladies. Often these missives were anonymous, which made them doubly interesting.

If the seventeenth of March fell on a school day we all were likely to be 'wearing of the green', perhaps a bit of shamrock, or maybe a hair ribbon if we happened to have one of that color. Four nationalities were represented in our neighborhood, American, German, Irish, and English, in about equal numbers. Although three quarters of us had never an ancestor in the Emerald Isle, we were glad to be gay with the other quarter who had. We were like that at Sylvan.

We all remember the first day of April, when we must be on the alert from the moment we opened our eyes in the morning until we closed them at night, lest we be 'fooled'.

Then came Easter Sunday. Before going to Sabbath School there was generally an Easter Egg hunt. On the following Monday, we were invariably entertained at school by wondrous tales of egg eating contests. After dispensing of a dozen or two hard boiled eggs at 'one fell swoop', the victor as well as the vanquished had survived the night, had been able to come to school 'under his own power' and still lived on the boast of his prowess. Picnic season, to us children, was such a long time coming, we marveled that the grown-ups should say the years were getting shorter.

On the twenty-sixth of April the Sacramento Lodge of the Order of Odd Fellows held the first picnic of the season. A train, consisting of between thirty and forty coaches brought hundreds of Odd Fellows and their families and friends to Leet's Grove, a short distance north of Roseville and only six or seven miles from Sylvan. From the surrounding farms and towns came more Odd Fellows and their families and friends. Sylvan was always well represented at this early picnic. There were more than enough spreading oaks in that fine grove to provide shade for all the groups that might gather. A dancing platform had been erected and an orchestra of several pieces had been brought from Sacramento. There were concessions from which the picnickers could purchase ice cream, lemonade and popcorn. Prizes were awarded to the winners in various games, there was much visiting, and everybody had a happy time. We imagine there might have been an occasional mother, who had arisen early, had prepared breakfast for her large family, had packed a big lunch basket, and had personally seen to it that every member of the family was dressed according to her plans and specifications, who, when the shadows were growing long, found the orchestral strains of "Home, Sweet Home" a welcome sound.

About May first the annual Sylvan picnic was held in the schoolyard. A program was generally put on by the school in the morning. The rest of the day was given to the enjoyment of the picnic lunches, to visits among neighbors, to dancing and games.

Being so near, Sylvan folks could celebrate the Fourth of July with Sacramento, a colorful parade in the morning, and a gorgeous display of fireworks in the evening.

And again, because we were so near, everybody in our neighborhood attended the State Fair year after year. This was a great privilege, one that children could hardly appreciate at the time. We saw some of the finest stock in the State, the newest inventions in farming machinery, our choicest fruits and vegetables, the most delicious jams, jellies and pickles, and the finest of needle work. No doubt many a daughter went home from the Fair inspired to start a quilt or a crocheted tidy before the pattern could be forgotten. One always could use more bed quilts, and a few decades ago it was quite essential that one's parlor chairs wear tidies. That lacy bit of over-dress seemed to give to the chairs an air of comfortable complacency as they faced each other across the Family Bible and the photograph album that lay on the marble-topped center table.

SYLVAN CEMETARY

People who travel east from Sacramento on the Lincoln Highway cannot fail to see, nor do they fail to remember our Sylvan cemetery.

The first grave there dates back to September, 1862, and is that of James Horton, a young man who had come to California from Tennessee. Because of some serious eye ailment, he became an inmate of the Sacramento County Hospital. One day in the Spring or early Summer of '62, when my father was delivering wood at the hospital, he met this young man. James begged father to find something for him to do in the country, by which he might live. The sight from one eye was gone, he feared total blindness, and he could not content himself in the hospital. Father took the young man home with him that day. He was big, good looking and in his early twenties. My people liked him, he was helpful about the place, and he became acquainted with the young folks in the neighborhood. But the condition of his eyes did not improve, that fear of blindness was ever with him, and one afternoon in early September he came to Mother, and handing her a bottle of strychnine, he calmly told her he had just taken some of it. Father was in Sacramento that day, and Mother had just dismissed her pupils. She hurriedly wrote a note to Mr. Thomas, more than half a mile away, and sent it by her little daughter. A saddled horse was tied to the hitching post at the Fifteen, and it was only a few minutes until Mr. Thomas arrived. Meanwhile James had lain down on a couch in the living room, and had asked Mother to stay with him. He expressed a wish to have his grave under a certain oak a little north of the schoolhouse that was then being built. This wish was carried out, and as I have said, his was the first grave in Sylvan cemetery. A stone, with his name and the date, marks the spot, in the southeast corner of the yard. The white oak, under which the grave was made, stood until February, 1938, when it was blown down in one of the hardest winds ever known in that part of the State.

The half of the cemetery that lies next to the schoolyard is the older part, and here we find the markers bearing the names of the older settlers. With the exception of a few pioneers who were of the Roman Catholic faith, and who were buried in Sacramento, nearly all of Sylvan's early settlers were laid to rest in this beautiful spot.

RANCHO DEL PASO

Rancho del Paso, earlier known as the Norris grant, was so closely associated with Sylvan, that a brief history of it seems to merit a little space here.

Up to 1822 Spain claimed all of California by right of discovery and occupation. In that year Mexico revolted from Spain, and California came under Mexican rule. In 1848, by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo it passed to the United States.

Under Spanish and Mexican rule many large grants of land were made, and by the treaty with the United States those grants were recognized. But the boundary lines were very uncertain, having been drawn from one natural object to another, and when it became necessary to define a boundary accurately great difficulty was experienced. In order to settle conflicting claims between original Californians and squatters, the United States Government appointed a Land Commission. This Land Commission began its work in 1852.

On December 20, 1844, Manuel Micheltorena, one of the last Governors of California under Mexican rule, granted to Eliab Grimes a large tract of land, consisting of 44,371 acres, in the Sacramento Valley north of the American River.

Eliab Grimes was a sea captain, born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, in 1780. He served as a lieutenant on a privateer in the war of 1812, and he was also, for many years a well known merchant of Honolulu, being senior member of the firm of E. and H. Grimes. In 1838 he visited California, and again in 1842. At this later date, he is said to have selected a ranch in the Sacramento Valley. This land was granted to him two years later. In 1847 Captain Grimes transferred this land to Hiram Grimes, his business partner in Honolulu, who came to California in that year. According to my authority, Hiram was a nephew of the elder Grimes. From 1844 till his death in 1848, Captain Grimes made his home in San Francisco, where "he owned a house and lot, was a well-known trader, and a member of the legislative council in 1847", and "he was regarded as an honorable upright man."

In those days, land was cheap, people were carefree, and living was rather expensive, so large land owners often found themselves in need of money. Records show that Hiram Grimes obtained money from Samuel Norris, with the ranch as security. Notes, mortgages, and other legal documents appear in the records until the abstract shows Norris in full possession with a patent granted by the United States Government, dated May 4, 1858.

Then Norris began to borrow money on the ranch. It seems that in April, 1859, he gave Lloyd Tevis a mortgage on the property to secure a loan of sixty-five thousand dollars. The note bore interest at 2% a month, payable monthly, and compounded monthly if not paid. Norris could not keep up such payments, and in 1860 Tevis began suit to foreclose the mortgage. The suit was decided against Norris, and the property was sold to Tevis for sixty-three thousand dollars, to satisfy the debt. For the further consideration of five thousand dollars Norris gave Tevis a deed to the property and withdrew from the ranch.

In 1884, when the land had greatly increased in value, Norris brought suit against Haggin and Tevis to obtain possession of the ranch, claiming that when he had deeded the property to Tevis, that he, Norris, was ill, and not in condition to attend to his affairs. While the judge may have admitted the truth of this statement, he said Norris had allowed too many years to elapse between his recovery and the filing of this suit. He decided the case against Norris, and the ownership of Haggin and Tevis was firmly established.

Haggin was a lover of horses and this ranch appealed to him as an ideal place for horse breeding, and after having remained practically idle for years it was stocked with some of the finest horses known. It is said that no other horse breeding farm in the world ever produced so many fleet footed horses. When racing declined, the Rancho del Paso horses were disposed of.

With the rapid growth of the Sacramento Valley, the grant owners received many offers from Realtors who wanted to buy and sub-divide. All attempts to purchase the ranch failed until 1910, when, after months of negotiation, it was finally sold to the Sacramento Valley Colonization Company in December of that year.

The history of Sylvan in the 50's, the 60's, and the early 70's, as here set down, was handed on from the generation that preceded mine. But we, their children, who were born and reared in that community, who knew intimately those pioneers, and their families and their homes, can easily and quite naturally imagine that we, too, had been there since the beginning. We feel that we, as well as our parents, had seen those heavily leaded freight wagons jolting over the uneven ground, moving very slowly, each in its own cloud of dust. We can see those tired, sweat streaked horses pulling into a stable yard at night fall.

And those Wayside Inns, 'bustling with activity'! Lights shine out from the open doors and windows. The rattle of dishes in the kitchen announces that preparations for supper are under way, and we can almost smell the steak and onions that are quite likely to be on the bill-of-fare tonight.

Yes, we of our generation like to imagine that we had been at Sylvan since its beginning; that we had shared the early lives of our pioneers; that we had been helpful in those years when they, in their modest way, were building their bit of California history.

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