

Many Nationalities Helped To Establish Dixon

The history of Silveyville and later Dixon cannot be written without some reference to those men who through their extraordinary efforts made that history.

The early history of this area after the Mexican takeover from the early Indians seems to date from about 1840. In 1840 the Mexican governor of California gave to William Wolfskill, the "Ranch Los Putos," consisting of four Mexican leagues of land situated in that extreme northern part of Solano County and part of the southerly part of Yolo County. The La Putah river or creek divided this grant into substantially equal parts. John Wolfskill, a brother of William, the grantee, interred into possession with his brother of this large grant. There exists just south of Putah Creek and just west of Winters the Wolfskill Ranch, now a part of the University of California. There is a historical marker at the gateway to this ranch telling of the early history of this grant. This is only a small part of the original acreage in the "Rancho Los Putos."

In 1842 Jose Francisco Armijo, an immigrant from New Mexico, obtained from Gov. Michel Tornea, a grant of three Mexican Leagues of land, lying southwest from Oolootatis Creek, now called Ulatris Creek, running through the town or village of Vacaville in Solano County. This grant or ranch was called Tolenas and was bounded on the north by said Oolootatis Creek on the west by Sierra Madre, or Napa range of mountains until they reached the Suisun Creek to its entrance into the swamps adjoining Suisun Valley on the south, and then eastward along said swamps to the plains in the direction of Denverton, and then northward through said plain to said Oolootatis Creek. This Tolenas Ranch was confirmed by Land Commissions and finally surveyed and patented.

This grant was contested by

a grant given to Chief Solano in the year 1842 of four leagues known as the Suisun grant. Chief Solano sold this grant to General Vallejo for 1000 silver dollars, who in about 1950 sold and conveyed the same Capt. Archibald A. Richie for fifty thousand dollars.

As these two grants overlapped, the boundaries were settled by arbitration and Chief Solano and his tribe were to have the south portion and Richie the north. Chief Solano chose to remain in Suisun Valley until his death and his son remained there until he, too, died. He showed little interest in his own grant.

In 1842 Manuel Vaca and Juan Felipe Pena came from New Mexico to California and settled on Putah Creek, then called Lihuaytos and pronounced Lihwah-e-tos. These two men obtained from the Mexican government a grant of 10 leagues. This grant joined the Los Putos grant and took in all land south of Davis including Tremont, Dixon, Silveyville and Batavia. Later Pena and Vaca were to grab some of the grant of Wolfskill's. This was again to lead to arbitration in which Vaca and Pena were very aggressive and as Chief Solano was not occupying his grant they moved into his land around the present site, Vacaville. The dispute over these grants led to many disputes as to who owned the land and under these circumstances many "squatters" moved onto the land in northern Solano County.

Later Pena and Vaca were to fall out with each other and Pena hired Judge S. D. Hasting and Judge Currey of Benicia to clear the title to his lands. Later Vaca also hired Capt. John B. Frisbil and Judge Currey to defend their title to land in the Dixon area. Although Vaca and Pena were not on friendly terms, they were both represented by Judge Currey to clear the title of land jointly owned by them.

For his services Judge Currey received the equivalent of half a Mexican League of land, Frisbie and Hasting a quarter of a league each. Later, Judge Currey purchased Hastings' interest which also included Frisbie's interest which Hastings had acquired. Judge Currey spent his declining years in Dixon with his son, Robert J. Currey, who farmed the large Currey holdings.

Judge Currey was elected to the Supreme Court of California on Oct. 21, 1863, and served four years. The last two years of his term he was Chief Justice and he held this position when he retired.

The son of Robert J. Currey, Robert S. Currey, managed and put the remaining acreage of the Currey ranch under irrigation and in row crops. This ranch is one of the finest in northern Solano County.

Robert Currey, the grandson of Judge Currey, passed away in June, 1968, and the property is now in the hands of his widow, Bernita, her son, Robert Jr., and two daughters, Corine and Carol.

Some of Judge Currey's property is now farmed by Mrs. Edith Schulze and her son Robert; other of the property is owned and managed by Laura Sargent, a granddaughter, and by Mrs. Nina Phillips, another granddaughter.

The early history must record Elijah S. Silvey as the man for whom the early settlement of Silveyville was named. Elijah Silvey ran a general store, post office and a stopping place for travelers from Sacramento to San Francisco. It was Silvey who hung a red lantern from a pole to guide the early traveler across the unfenced prairie grown high with wild oats to a place to rest and stable their teams.

The early settlers who called at Silvey's store was Hardin Reddick, Sam McBride, Henry McCune, J. H. Garnett, James

Sweany, Neyton Peters, S. Fountain, A. G. Summers, the Schroeders, Sarah Stephens, J. Brinkeroff and the Sievers.

The railroad was built three miles to the east of Silveyville and the town was moved to the railroad on the property of Thomas Dickerson. The name was later shortened to Dixon through misspelling. W. R. Ferguson was one of the first residents and storekeeper, serving Dixon in many capacities. Peter Timm was one of those who helped move many businesses and homes to the new site at Dixon from Silveyville. Peter Timm, besides being a house mover, became a farmer of prominence. Many of his heirs still are prominent in Dixon today.

Due to the mode of travel (horse and buggy) and the condition of the roads, many small communities grew up in the area. The most prominent of these communities were Tremont, Batavia, Binghamton, Maine Prairie and Elmira. These communities had their own social events and became groups of very close-knit people.

Tremont seemed to attract those of German descent while the Irish seemed to gather around Binghamton and Maine Prairie. Dixon was the melting pot of the area, with all nationalities.

In the Tremont area the names of Hamel, Foster, Sikes, Eggert, Maxwell, Buckley, Stick, Runge, Wire, Rohwer, Feudner, Jansen, Holdridge, Buckley, Collier, Agee, Kidwell, Hanke, McCann, Saltzen, Morgan, Rehmke, Becker, Hyde, Grieve, Montgomery, Wright, McLaughlin and Burnett were among the pioneers.

In the Batavia-Elmira area one finds the Sweenys, the Foxes, the Byrnes, the Smith, the Kilkennys, the Fords, the Daviss and the Keithly's, along with the Lewis, Silvas and the Cavalias, who were Portuguese. In the Binghamton and Maine

Prairie communities, we find great activity, for in the early days before railroads, water transportation was important. The early settlers liked to be near the water so it could be used for transportation as well as water for livestock. History shows that in dry years all the livestock had to be driven to the Sacramento River to keep them from dying. This caused depletion of the feed near the water and many head of livestock perished before the winter rains came to allow the return to the foothills.

All the grain grown on the rich, fertile land had to be hauled to Maine Prairie and placed on barges to be hauled to the Bay area. Long lines of wagons and teams made their way to Maine Prairie over dusty roads from Solano and Yolo counties.

There was a hotel at Maine Prairie to care for the needs of the teamsters with food and drink. This hotel was run by Mrs. Rebecca Lewis and later by the Chave family.

In this area there were many large farms and sheep ranches. Henry Peters, J. F. Brown, H. McElwaine, C. Paige, M. McLaughlin and Cummings all had large holdings. Other names one finds as early pioneers are Petersen, Wights, Triplett, Burrows, McCray, Conners, Davis, Van Pelt, Coleman, Rayn, Luttes, Plummer, J. Lewis and Rathnke.

Binghamton was above high water and during the winter floods everyone had to move out if Maine Prairie. The schools were located near Binghamton.

In the Dixon area one can trace many family names back to the founding of the town, many of whom moved from Silveyville, such as Carpenter, Ferguson, Timm, Van Sant, McCune, Garnett, Reddick, McFadyen, Rice, Eppinger, Dickson, Dudley, Holly, Culver, Schulze, Porter, Bloom, Cline, Ross, Madden, Ross and Mayes.