

Fair Oaks History:

The Ghost of Sailor Bar

One of the intriguing old legends of the Fair Oaks area concerns a ghost that haunted the Sailor Bar area. For some time we have sought to find the source of this story and finally located it in a little magazine called *Oak Leaves*, published in Fair Oaks in 1908. The account was included in an article entitled "Early Day History of the Section Now Known As Fair Oaks." We are herewith reprinting the entire article just as the judge wrote it.

BY JUDGE W.A. ANDERSON

There are memories that can never die — in the old days. These were halcyon days, and yet with that memory there are times for tears and regrets, and from the deep, still chambers of the heart come gaunt specters of hopes blasted; bright, joyous love driven to frozen despair. While we lift with the magic wand of memory the curtain that veils the past, we, behold, in addition to the grandeur and beauty of primitive nature, withered flowers, scattered leaves and the unholy work of vandal hands, and of selfish motives in the quest of the demon GOLD.

In the middle and latter "50's," where Fair Oaks is now located was a wilderness of sturdy oaks with its crop of acorns, and the home of wild game, and the periodical resting place for hundreds of thousands of wild pigeons. I have seen the trees literally covered with these migratory birds, and at night one could actually knock them down with a stick, not even requiring the use of a gun. Here, too, would occasionally appear the monster grizzly, which came down from his mountain fastnesses to see what he could find. Up to about 1854 those beautiful fur animals — the beaver and otter — were plentiful.

The wild deer, also, in the winter months, could be seen in numbers. It was no uncommon sight for the settlers on the south side of the American River to see a stately buck with his partner and their young, standing on the high bluff, just above where the city of Fair Oaks now is, (I call Fair Oaks a city, for in the very near future that thrifty place will reach that dignity), at early sunrise, as though desiring to witness the splendor of the appearance of the orb of day.

On the plains opposite vast herds of antelope roamed, but soon disappeared upon the advance of the settlement of man.

The American River was a beautiful clear stream, which flowed upon its gravel bed, and which was then more than thirty feet below the present artificial bed. Along this stream was a perfect arbor of wild grape vines, which in season were loaded with this fruit. The banks were embroidered with wild roses, blackberry vines, wild fern, lilies, and all manner of verdure. It was the home of the native song birds, the oriole, canary, linnet, mocking bird and others. All day the sweet songster kept up this music, making the scene, at once, a literal paradise. The water of the river, particularly in summer and fall, was as pure and clear as crystal. It was, in fact, a scene to feast the eyes upon.

On the north side of the American for a number of miles above and below this point, there were very few settlers. The rolling hills and densely wooded character of the land seemed, at that time, to have no attraction for the farmer or tiller of the soil. Idle Nature had full sway, except, perhaps, when some

of the settlers in the valley on the other side of the river needed a supply of wood, and then it was that encroachment upon Nature's forest was made, even against the watchful eyes of the managers of the San Juan grant, which included all this valuable tract of land.

At this point is also an historical fact, that this was the extreme western limit of gold placer mining on the American River. About 1855, a couple of sailors found some gold deposits on a small gravel bar that had been formed in the bed of the river. This bar was "worked" over by the then chief means of placer mining, namely, the "rocker" or "cradle," and the "longtom." The little caup was named "Sailor Bar," but after a few months, and the extraction of several thousands of dollars, the "find" was "petered out," to use an expression then common among the miners. In connection with "Sailor Bar," an incident is recalled which savors of the supernatural, and partakes of the ghostly. One of the sailor miners was drowned in the river at the bar, and the neighbors declared that the spirit of the departed sailor haunted the place where his body in life resided. The specter seemed to have some kind of grievance to adjust, and would appear and point his bony finger towards the east, and shriek at some imaginary foe up the river. For a number of years, after each period of high water in the American River, the gaunt specter would appear and repeat these demonstrations. It is said that any stormy night during those annual freshets the specter could be seen walking upon the swollen water, pointing towards the east, and this for a number of years, but finally after the bar had been submerged with debris to the extent of thirty feet, the specter disappeared. Thus Fair Oaks is not without its ancestral specter.

On the south side of the American river opposite and adjacent to this wilderness of oaks, there were many richly cultivated farms, orchards and melon fields.

Tommy Cox, as he was thus familiarly called, had a splendid orchard on the south bank of the American River. His fruits, particularly peaches and melons, were the pride of the City of Sacramento, as well as that of the neighbors. There was never any danger of boys stealing Tommy Cox's fruit, for they all knew that all that was necessary was to visit the orchard and cast a longing look at his luscious peaches and the quick eye of Tommy Cox would soon discern what they wanted, and none ever left empty handed.

Dave Blubaugh was another pioneer orchardist, who had a magnificent orchard on the south side of the river, and he, too, was the very soul of liberality. T. G. Saulsbury was another thrifty farmer, and

Saulsbury Station, on the Sacramento Valley Railroad, was at his place. Prior to the construction of the S.V.R.R., Saulsbury's was a teamsters' resort en route for the mining districts north and east.

All these beautiful orchards are now thirty feet beneath the sand and debris occasioned by dumping the hills and mountains into the American River and its tributaries, through the agency of hydraulic process, and those infernal machines called "little giants" — more properly "little demons." The dredges of later years are also about to consummate the destruction left undone by the "little giant," unless stayed by wise counsel and decided action on the part of the farmers.

There are many other pioneers of those days whom I might mention, who had beautiful homes and orchards and yards opposite and near this point. Patterson and John Waters, proprietors of the old "Ten Mile House," Dr. W. S. Manloche, John Hoey, J. T. Day, John Rooney and others, whose names are not recalled.

Robert Allen was then proprietor of the "Monte Christo Exchange, a famous stopping place for teamsters on the road to the mountains. "Bob" Allen, it will be remembered, was cruelly murdered a number of years ago on Seventh street in Sacramento, by three thugs. All those sturdy pioneers have long since crossed the dark river, and all those scenes have gone "glimmering through the dream of things that were."

A short distance above this point was another bar called "Mississippi Bar," which was rich in gold, and at one time there was an "Oriental City" of quite four thousand Chinese. Here was a regularly laid out city with streets and alleys, and all kinds of Chinese stores. At this point was the well known "ferry" across the American River, owned by Chas. Marsae and James Graves. Upon this ferry all teams and traffic to Auburn, Gold Hill, Forest Hill and other mining points north of the American River, had to cross. The ferry and proprietors have so long passed away that both have almost been forgotten except by an occasional "old-timer."

All these scenes have melted away like the minutes that fall from the spring of time. In those days we literally walked on pavements of gold, and slept on beds of roses.

