

THE



SAN JOAQUIN HISTORIAN

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 3, New Series

Spring 1989

Number 1

“TOWNE CORNER”

(The following article is based upon a review of “The Descendants of William Towne” compiled by Edwin Eugene Towne, and upon an interview with Mr. Del Smith.)

The name of Towne first appears in England in 1274, according to the New England Historical and Genealogical Register. The earliest appearance of the name in America is in 1635 when William Towne was an inhabitant of Cambridge. The William Towne family next appears in Salem in 1640 in a book of early grants. There are records of several land conveyances by William Towne and the name is mentioned also in “History of Salem” by C.B. Gillespie.

In its early history, Salem was known as the “City of Witches”. More than 150 persons believed to be associated with Satan were thrown into prison and 27 were hung on “Gallows Hill”. The Towne family was caught up in this hysteria and two of their daughters (Rebecca and Mary) were among the 27 who paid with their lives. Usually those accused of being witches were “the ugly and lower classes” but in this instance the Town daughters were cultured women who maintained their integrity and dignity to the last. This persecution was started by the most reputable citizens and was based on an old Roman maxim that the “Voice of the people is the will of God”. The demon of superstition was set loose by the family of Rev. Mr. Parris and the accusations followed in rapid succession.

The descendants of William Towne have taken up residence in many different states and engaged in a variety of occupations. We are particularly interested in Burton Augustus Towne, born in

St. Paul, Minnesota September 24, 1874 and died August 1, 1938. Burton graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in Engineering. He came to California in 1898 and worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad in Sacramento for five years.

In 1902 he moved to Woodbridge where he became a vineyardist and orchardist. He married Alice Weinstock of Sacramento on November 12, 1902 and they lived in a house on the corner of Lower Sacramento Road and Turner. The original house burned in 1907 and they moved into a one-room cottage on the property. The house was gradually expanded to thirteen rooms including rooms for a butler and other servants. The gardens were beautiful and contained huge weeping willow trees, a pond, and over 500 rose bushes. The last rose bush has not been pruned since 1940 and presently is 110 feet long and 20 feet high. The garden required the services of four full-time gardeners. Travelers thought that the place was a public park and often stopped to picnic on their journey from Stockton to Sacramento. The Lower Sacramento Road was named because of frequent flooding. Lodi is about 15 feet higher elevation; the upper Sacramento Road was in the vicinity of Jack Tone and went through Lockeford. Lower Sacramento was a well traveled roadway and the Towne property came to be known as “Towne Corner”.

"Town Corner", cont.

The Towne house was the first in the area to have electricity (because it was close to the road) and the first to have hot running water — the boiler is still in place but, of course, no longer used.

Pauline Koch North, who still lives in Stockton, went to work for the Towne family in 1928 (at the age of 16) and tells of many social activities, picnics, and parties around the pool at Towne Corner.

As an engineer and automobile enthusiast, Burton Towne became greatly interested in San Joaquin County's road improvement program in 1909. Towne, Frank A. West, and Stuart P. Elliot composed the first county highway commission. During this period the county voted to finance 238 miles of highway which served as a model for other counties.

Burton Towne was later appointed by Governor Hiram Johnson to the first state highway commission where he served for eight years. Towne was a charter member of the California Automobile Association, serving on its Board of Directors from 1914 to 1938 and as president in 1926 and 1927.

Burton Towne was very active in urging grape growers to ship quality grapes to eastern markets. He was one of the first growers in Lodi to put up a special pack for the auction markets. He was one of the first growers to suggest the conversion of surplus grapes into brandy for storage.

He was one of the organizers of the Citizens National Bank and served as director. When the bank was purchased by the Bank of Italy, later known as the Bank of America, he served as a member of the advisory board until his death.

Burton Towne and Alice (Weinstock) Towne had two sons: Burton Augustus Towne, Jr. (1903-1959) and Horace Dresser Towne (currently living in Walnut Grove). This would be the ninth generation in America; succeeding generations still live in the vicinity; most have been active in community affairs.

But let us now turn back to the house known as Towne Corner.

In 1984 Burton Towne III was living on the property and Isabel Towne, widow of Burton Towne II, was living alone in the house. Ms. Kris Cromwell had become friends with Isabel who called Ms. Cromwell when it came time to sell the property.

In 1982 Kris Cromwell took a trip to Connecticut and was very much impressed with the country inns in that area. So she and her son Delwyn Smith purchased the house along with two and one-half acres. The deal was completed on April 1, 1984. It is the intention of the new owners to insure the historical value of the property by using it as a country inn. They based the name "Wine and Roses" on the former existence of 500 rose bushes in the garden. One of their first projects was to obtain approval of the property as a historical site. This recognition came from the San Joaquin County Historical Society in the following letter:

(See next page)

THE SAN JOAQUIN HISTORIAN

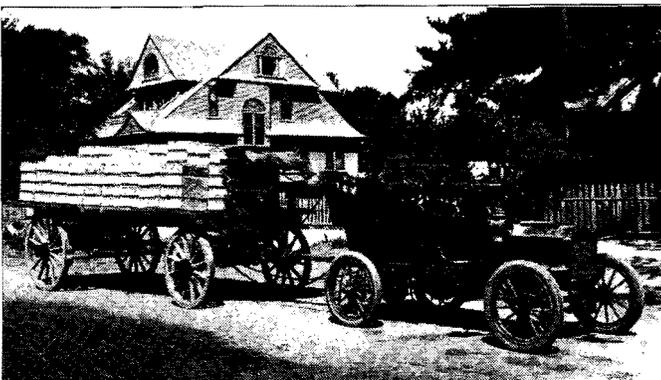
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HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
P.O. Box 21, Lodi, California 95241
Robert W. Clottu, Editor

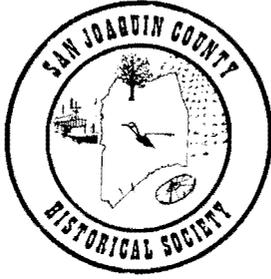
The San Joaquin County Historical Society, a non-profit corporation, meets the fourth Monday, monthly except July, August and December. Membership includes subscriptions to *The San Joaquin Historian* and the newsletter, *News and Notes*. Non-members may purchase individual copies from the Society. The Society directs the operation of the San Joaquin County Historical Museum.

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY
HISTORICAL MUSEUM
Michael W. Bennett, Director
Mickey Grove Park

(11793 N. Mickey Grove Road, Lodi,
P.O. Box 21, Lodi, California 95241
Phone (209) 368-9154 or 463-4119



The original Towne House in 1906 in background, a wagon loaded with grapes ready to ship; the wagon is being pulled by a horseless carriage.



San Joaquin County Historical Society

INCORPORATED

P.O. BOX 21 - LODI, CALIFORNIA 95241

October 9, 1984

Mr. Kris Cromwell
P.O. Box 1425
Woodbridge, Calif. 95258

Dear Ms. Cromwell:

After a review of the "Towne Ranch House" by members of the Landmark Committee and me, the San Joaquin County Historical Society Board of Directors agrees that the property is of historical significance.

The original four-room house purchased in 1902 by Burton A. Towne, Sr., was expanded to thirteen rooms by 1931. The property is known locally as the "Towne Corner."

We are pleased that this home is to be preserved. Your proposed use as a "Bed and Breakfast" business should insure its survival for years to come.

Sincerely Yours,

James Beardsley
President

cc: Landmark Committee

“Towne Corner”, cont.

Del Smith and Kris Cromwell plan to preserve the estate and to create an atmosphere of historic surroundings so that people can enjoy the place for many years to come. They provide a beautiful setting for weddings and private parties. At present they have nine guest rooms; they plan to build additional guest cottages on the surrounding grounds. Another ten and one-half acres have been acquired recently which includes the Towne grape packing shed. One of the legacies in the house was a photo album with pictures of Governor Hiram Johnson and Mrs. Johnson at a party at Towne Corner. There are many other pictures of automobiles and the Towne properties in the Sierras.

The house and 2½ acres have been included in the Lodi City limits. Eventually, the plan is to build historic style buildings along the Turner Road frontage to house businesses such as a photographer, ice cream parlor, jewelry store, and others. The entrance would then be changed to the Woodhaven Street side.



A recent picture of the front of the Wine and Roses Country Inn (formerly Towne Corner).

The GRANGE

According to Encyclopedia Americana: Brit. Grange is a farm with its dwelling house and appurtenances.

Organizations were formed throughout the United States during the 1870's known as the Grange. The movement was organized to demand a lower tariff and railroad charges. Membership was limited to farmers, their wives and children. "The Grange is a family fraternity with an abiding interest in agriculture." There are now over 300 Granges in 48 California counties. The Stockton Grange was organized August 12, 1873 with 20 farmers and 10 women; however, it is inactive at this time. There are other Granges in Manteca, Ripon, Tracy, Lockeford, French Camp-Lathrop, and Woodbridge. The San Joaquin County Grange is known as The Pomona Grange.

Here is the story of Woodbridge Grange No. 84 as written by Robert G. Williams in 1939:

Woodbridge Grange

"This Grange was organized in Woodbridge, San Joaquin County, California in 1874. It continued active until 1898, when it was consolidated with Lodi Grange.

The location of the records of this grange is unknown now to those who were members in it, except such as may be preserved in the archives of the California State Grange. Therefore I am compelled to draw upon my memory, and the recollection of the few members who are available.

This Grange held its meetings in the old Masonic Hall situated on the river-bank opposite to the I.O.O.F. Hall.

In 1882, the Masons built a new brick hall, and the grange bought and repaired the old one, which they used until 1897, when it was sold and torn down.

The activities of the grange at that time were, to a considerable degree, merged with the cooperative stores and the Pomona Grange of the county. These cooperatives were managed as any other merchandising business with a trade card system for the members. One such store was in Lodi, and one in Stockton. The Granger's Bank of San Francisco was owned by granger stock-holders over the state.

The Pomona Grange was a dignified power in the public affairs of the county and the state. Its committees worked intelligently with public authorities in the regulation of public business.

In all of the granges of the county, Woodbridge,

Stockton, Lodi, Waterloo, and French Camp were groups of the original pioneers of the county. As a type, they were experienced and resourceful to a high degree. Woodbridge Grange had its quota of this fine body of men, and I believe this memorial would not be complete without some special mention of these determined and active spirits of the Grange. Of all of these, we might truthfully say: they suited their actions to the words, "Faith, Hope and Charity with Fidelity."

Stalwart among them was Bro. E.J. McIntosh, a farmer and blacksmith. Tall, slightly stooped with a heavy silver beard, he took command of his audience at once. He made good wagons and he made good speeches; not always with the best rhetorical arrangement, but brim-full of good reasoning and common sense. He represented his district for a time in the State Assembly.

Full beards were the custom in those days among the older people. Bro. J.L. Hutson was a fine specimen of bearded manhood. Sandy complected, of massive build and slow and deliberate of speech, he was qualified by nature and education to represent the district in the Assembly, as he was called to do.

Bro. Ross Sargeant, a farmer whose name is famous in the history of the county, seldom came to the grange, but he never refused a request for money in behalf of the grange. Bro. Geo. H. Ashley, W.B. White, Victor Jahant, Henry Beckman, H.C. Shattuck, J.D. Huffman, L.D. Wakefield, Jos. Fowler, and H.M. Woods, with their families, were among the pioneer immigrants. Bro. Ezra Fiske, a splendidly capable man anywhere, was always modest and contented to cooperate with his neighbors in their community tasks. My list is not complete as it is from memory covering a space of over fifty years.

The population of the county and state was only one-seventh as large as it is at present; it was the "horse and buggy" age, but people came long distances and many congregated in Woodbridge. Here at that time were two churches, three fraternal orders and a college. The Woodbridge Grange always met on Tuesday at 2 o'clock p.m.

The most vivid impression I have of this splendid body and its work covers the year of my Master-ship with them. At the O. Station Bro. J.L. Hutson, at the Lec. Station, Sister Edith Emde.

During the year the Australian Ballot system, and the Referendum were being proposed. They were

Woodbridge Grange, cont.

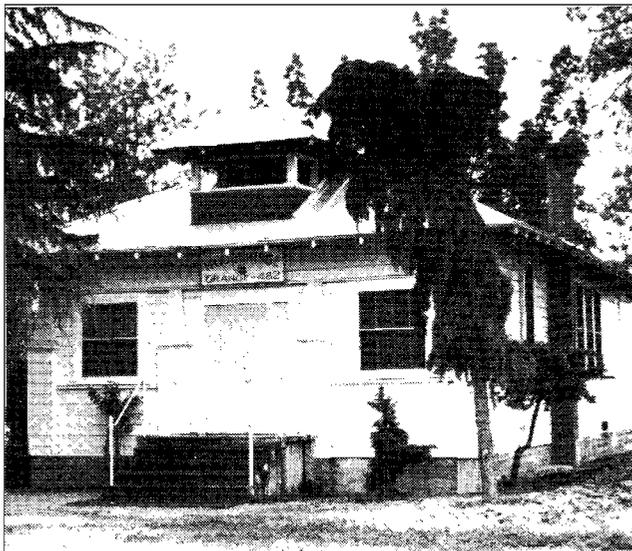
fully discussed by Woodbridge Grange, and it unanimously cooperated with other agencies to make them the law. Faults in the tax system of the county were taken up, working committees formed to work with county officers in correcting the system.

Social matters were not neglected. During this year, 1888, Bro. Geo. Ashley was married and the Grange gave them a reception and banquet in the lower hall. Bro. A.B. Curry, one of the authors of the grange ritual, and whose name is familiar in the grange song book was a visitor on this occasion. His witty remarks and pleasantries at the expense of the bride and groom were enjoyed. Many were the congratulations tendered this elderly couple, whose happiness was soon to meet a tragic end. Mrs. Ashley in the act of feeding her fowls one evening, dropped out of sight. After a search, she was found dead under a pile of grain that had toppled over her. Nor was this the end of the deep sorrow of Bro. Ashley. Soon after, his eldest son was killed by a horse he was handling.

It was a sad moment that day when I met him face to face, and he said to me: "Bro. Williams, these tragedies have broken my heart."

On the seventh of May that year, we were to have a Grangers picnic at Clements. The State Master, E.W. Davis of Santa Rosa, was to be in attendance, and as it was my duty to do, I met him at the home of Mr. T.R. Burkett whose home was next to the south end of the Mokelumne bridge. I had a carriage to take him to Clements, but a rain commenced and lasted all day. We remained in the house for the day and postponed the picnic to the next week, and lost the stock of ice cream.

The officers during my term, delivered their work from memory. Much stress was placed on the final degree, and in carrying out the drill of the "Harvest Feast". The repast was spread in the lower hall, and when ready the announcement was made: Ladies choose your partners, visitors first and proceed to the feast. This was done with orderly step and precision, timed by the piano upstairs.



Woodbridge Grange Hall moved to its location in 1939, picture taken in 1940. The Hall looks much the same in 1989.

The most exasperating subject that I remember to have been brought before the grange was the subject: "Resolved that women should have the right to vote." The pros and cons came forward with great zeal, and the question was carried by a small majority.

Bro. Maloom Jordan passed away during the year and funeral services were conducted by the officers of Woodbridge Grange.

Of all the original members of this grange, perhaps twenty are still living (1939). Of these Mrs. Henry Beckman and Mrs. L.D. Wakefield are the oldest—over 90 years."

Robert G. Williams

P.M. Woodbridge Grange No. 84, Pof H

Woodbridge Grange #84 consolidated with Lodi in 1898, however, Lodi became inactive and Woodbridge #482 was organized April 11, 1932. Of the 27 charter members, only Richard Coldman is still active. The first meetings were held in the I.O.O.F. Hall in Woodbridge. In 1939 a vacant school building was located about six miles east of Galt. It was purchased and moved to a lot on Academy Street in Woodbridge. The structure was enlarged and refinished and dedicated June 10, 1939. The lot cost \$275 and the initial cost of the building was \$774.01. A loan was obtained from the F. & M. Bank at 7% interest. In 1978 a governmental works project provided the manpower and material to remodel the building which is being used today for a multitude of activities.

Granges throughout California are working to improve the quality of life in their communities and the nation. One page from a deer skin covered hand written history of Woodbridge Grange #482 reads as follows:

Projects 1934

Woodbridge Grange #482 voted for two meetings a month.

Organized Rabbit Drives.

Organized Wine Grape Growers of California—Geo. Schlmeyer as president.

Resolution opposing importing oils and fats from foreign countries; Backed by Dairy Association.

Resolution to protect Turtle Doves.

Woodbridge Grange, cont.

Float at Grape Festival.

Rabbit Drive.

Assisting the fight against vine hoppers.

This delightful journal is dedicated to Esther F. Lange and covers the years from 1932 to 1961.

In March, 1989 the Woodbridge Firefighter Association presented Grange #482 with a microwave oven for outstanding service to the community. This grange has won first prize for their

booth at the Lodi Grape Festival every year, except one, from 1950 to 1985.

The Grange Hall is now used five days each week for the senior citizens hot lunch program; there are about 20 volunteers and about 35 seniors. The hall is also utilized for the brown bag program for low income families. Of course, the hall is the regular meeting place for #482 as well as for two meetings each year for Pomona Grange, various dinners, and club activities. The present membership is 50 in number. Ted Wagner is Master and Edna Wagner was Secretary - Treasurer for more than eight years. We are indebted to these hard-working volunteers for the above information.



Edna Wagner, Woodbridge Grange Secretary for eight years; Ted Wagner, Master 1989

Lockeford Grange 54 Years Ago, or In The Beginning

The following report on the early days of the Lockeford Grange was presented by Esther (Fitzsimmons) Bosse, Charter Member, at the anniversary dinner on March 12, 1989. We are also indebted to Mrs. Henry Gronroos for supplying the information; she has been Secretary for more than 25 years.

Lockeford District Grange was organized on January 15, 1935. In the fall of 1934, some farmers in the Lockeford and surrounding area, encouraged by members of Woodbridge Grange, began exploring the possibilities of having a grange in this area. Before very long they had gathered 25 names, enough to apply for a charter. A meeting was called on January 15, 1935 at the Lockeford Odd Fellows Hall, with members of Woodbridge Grange and District Deputy George Lloyd; Lockeford Grange was organized. Officers were elected and our first

meeting was held.

Names on our Charter are:

J.E. Fitzsimmons
C.A. Bacon
Viola Fitzsimmons
Mabel Linley
David Fitzsimmons
Esther Fitzsimmons
Robert E. Dietderich
W.E. Neer

Walter Henry
Dorothy Schmiect
Paul Sobskousky
Mayme Votaw
W.H. Potter
Charles Faber
B.A. Steele
Olive M. Neer

Lockeford Grange, cont.

Gust Schmiedt	Barbara Schmiedt
C.E. Votaw	John Holman
Emma Potter	Oscar Mindach
W.W. Tappan	Charlie Beckman

In 1935 the whole area was still feeling the effects of the Great Depression. Lots of people were out of work, and money was scarce, but for us to pay the State Grange Per Capita Tax, we had to raise some money, so dues were assessed at \$2.00 a year. Most members could only afford to pay 50¢ per quarter at a time. That left another problem, where to get funds to pay for the rent of \$5.00 per month for two meetings. Upon advice from Woodbridge Grange, we organized the ladies into the Lockeford Grange Home Economics Club. Our function was to raise money to pay the rent, buy Ritual Books and regalia and refreshment needs, like cups and silverware. How was the money raised you might ask? We had Basket Socials, where the ladies made fancy decorated baskets or boxes, filled them with refreshments for two, then they were auctioned off to the highest bidder, who would share it with the one who had prepared it. There were homemade candy and cake sales where the cake was sold by the slice.

We joined the Pomona Grange and helped run a kitchen at the 1935 San Joaquin County Fair. The members made quilts and had raffles, served a turkey dinner and gave Whist card parties.

New members were admitted every meeting and we met twice a month on the first and third Fridays. We chose Friday night, because our members had children of school age. Having the children at the meetings soon caused a problem for their care, so in 1936, the Juvenile grange of Lockeford was organized with 22 members. We were very proud of this for we were the youngest grange in San Joaquin County and the first to have a Juvenile Grange for our children, and they loved it. Now we had to have a room or place for them to meet, as they were using the banquet room of the hall. So at the next meeting our Grange Master appointed a committee to see what could be done. The report came back that there was a single story building in Lodi that we could buy and move to a suitable location. So our lot was found and the building moved and raised so a banquet room and juvenile room could be added. This was done almost exclusively by Grange members led by the Grange Master who was a contractor, builder and house mover. Everyone who could, worked on our project whenever they could. If the menfolk had a work day, the women furnished hot lunch and cleaned up. By January, 1937 we had the building ready for use, and dedication ceremonies were held with the State Master, George

Shelmeyer officiating. Once again it was a proud moment for us, being the youngest grange in our county to have a hall. Money for buying the building and lot came from our members as loans, some could only give \$5.00, some \$10.00, \$20.00 and \$25.00. We had three \$50.00 loans and one for \$100.00. All of the loans were repaid by 1940.

The number of card parties given to raise funds was staggering. Prizes and refreshments were mostly donated. As we had no card tables or chairs or Bingo sets, we had to borrow them, which meant that someone had to get them and then return them. Our hall had many uses besides meetings and card parties. There were dances, weddings of all kinds, birthday parties, anniversary, Christmas, plus Church and Sunday School. Other activities of our Grange were entering a float in the Lodi Grape Festival Parade in 1935 and having a Hamburger-Hot Dog Stand during the Festival Time at its location near the train depot in Lodi. The Kerr Glass Company put on a canning demonstration. We had picnics and pancake breakfasts at the Calaveras Big Trees. We put on an Antique and Hobby Show which was a huge success, and hosted a 35th Anniversary for the Master and his wife. Also, we hosted an 18th Anniversary for the H.E.C. Chairperson and her husband, a luncheon for the Pomona club, had kitchen showers for newlyweds, and baby showers for prospective Grangers. There were pot-luck suppers galore and we celebrated our Grange Anniversaries with a dinner for all. Money raised from the various functions was used to repay loans, pay for lumber and materials used to complete our hall and to buy equipment for the kitchen, like the stove, sinks and the other necessities.

Lockeford District Grange #579 has a lot to be proud of. We still own our hall debt free. Over the years it has been remodeled and has undergone some changes which make it a very nice asset for the members and the town of Lockeford. We have been here for 54 years and a whole lot of good people have come through our doors. There never was a time I regret joining the Grange. Friendships I've made have lasted through the years. Besides Esther Bosse being the only Charter member still with us we have Donald Cox and now Tessie Huestis as members over 50 years.

The first officers of the Lockeford Grange were: James E. Fitzsimmons, *Master*; C.A. Bacon, *Overseerer*; W.W. Tapplin, *Lecturer*; David Fitzsimmons, *Steward*; B.A. Steele, *Assistant Steward*; Esther Fitzsimmons, *Chaplin*; Gust J. Schmiedt, *Treasurer*; Olive M. Neer, *Secretary*; Paul Sobkowsky, *Gatekeeper*; Edith Steele, *Ceres*; Mabel Linley, *Lady Assistant Steward*; Viola Fitzsimmons, *Pomona*; Dorothy Schmiedt, *Flora*; with Walter C. Henry, W.E. Neer, and John Holman as the first Executive Committeemen.

Let There Be Light and Power

By Robert W. Clout

Today, we give little thought to the use of gas and electrical power. It is available in our homes for appliances, heat, light, TV, computers, entertainment, and convenience. It is available in great quantity for our industries and businesses.

The incentives for the development of steam generators and hydro electric power in the central valley were generally related to pumping water for agriculture. On the other hand, the incentive for developing the production of gas in northern California began with the vision of lighting the streets of San Francisco.

Not every residence had electricity and/or gas for heating when I was growing up in Manteca during the 1920's and 30's. It was recognized as early as the 1850's that the soil in the central valley is fertile, that the climate is conducive to growing a great variety of crops, and that it is easy to dig a well. All that was needed was power to pump the water. Gasoline and steam engines would work but they were too expensive and would serve only a few acres each. With cheap electric power available, thousands of acres could go into cultivation.

As a youth, I remember well, the close relationship between farmers and representatives of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. The farmers and the P.G. & E. had the problem and expense of getting power lines to the pumps in the fields. During the 30's, farmers had a particularly hard time in meeting the "demand" charges for electrical power. Representatives of PG & E were very understanding during those depression years and would work with farmers to develop a payment schedule.

So, cheap electric power for pumping well water prompted our pioneers to develop electrical energy in the great Central Valley of California. Another need for cheap power was for oil well pumping. I lived in Coalinga, an oil boom town, for a short while in 1920. I remember accompanying my uncle in tending the one cylinder pumps. They were run on distillate—a by-product of oil refining. Now the wells pretty well take care of themselves, thanks to electric power.

The Pacific Gas and Electric Company today is the result of consolidating approximately 520 predecessor companies—beginning in 1852. One of the most significant of these consolidations was the formal agreement combining Great Western, San

Joaquin Electric Company, and PG & E—signed March 29, 1930.

The San Joaquin Light and Power Corporation began harnessing streams for the generation of electricity in the Southern San Joaquin Valley as early as 1894. Albert G. Wishon, as manager, built the company into a great and efficient utility. PG & E paid the last of the old San Joaquin Light and Power bonds when they matured on March 1, 1952. This concluded a capital simplification program covering 30 years.

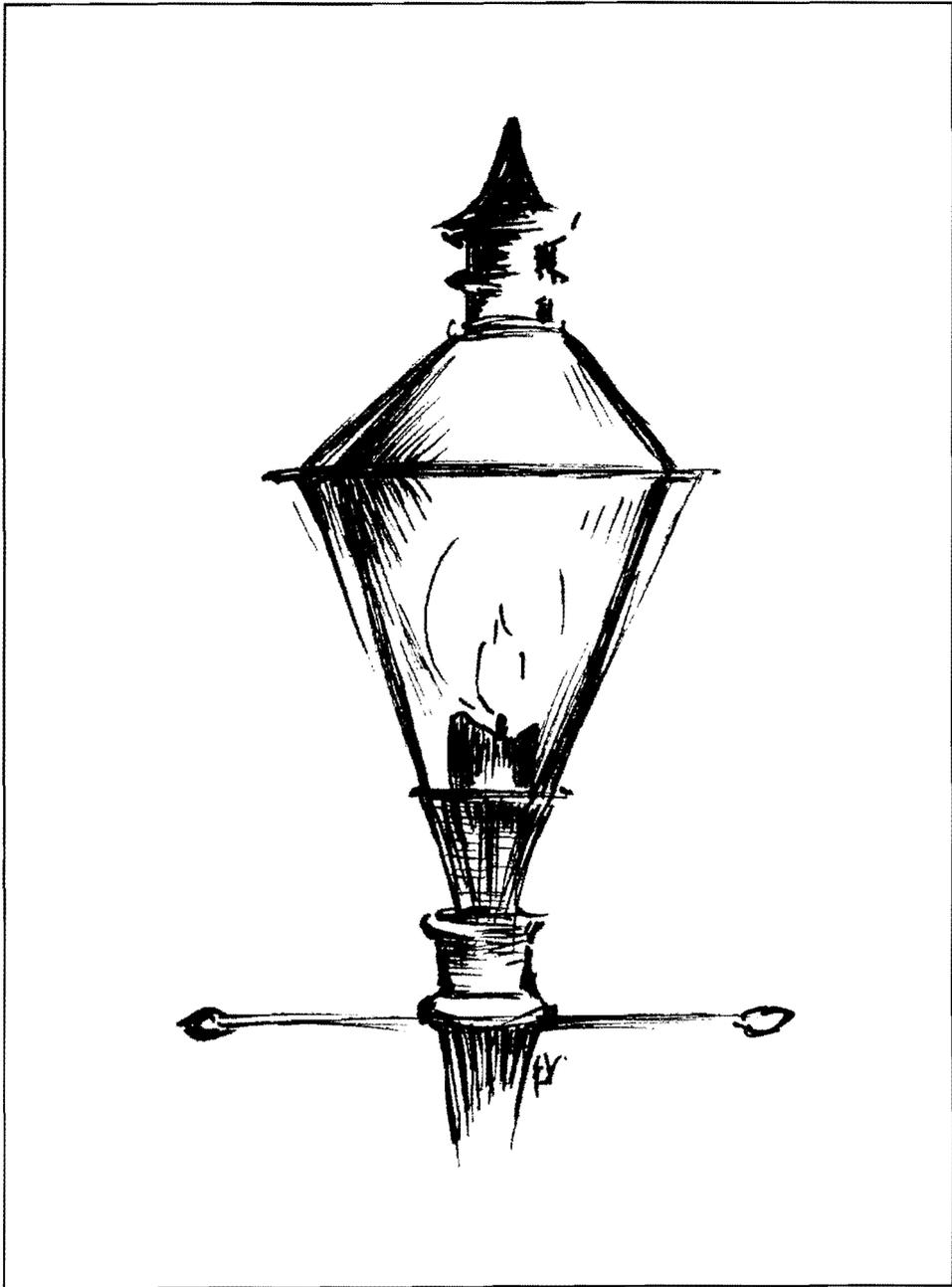
Peter Donahue came to San Francisco in 1849 and opened a blacksmith shop with his brothers. Later the business developed into the Union Iron and Brass Foundry. Peter had a vision to light the city with gas lamps. The gas industry was unknown in the West at that time. So Peter set out to learn how to manufacture gas. The gas was extracted from coal retorts subjected to high heat. A franchise to erect a gas works, lay pipes, etc. was obtained in July, 1852 and the Donahue brothers proceeded to organize the San Francisco Gas Company.

Stockton obtained a gas lighting service only a few years after San Francisco had installed its first street lamps. The Stockton Gas Company was organized July 23, 1859 and was bought by the San Francisco Gas Company ten years later.

In 1864 a natural gas well was developed on the site of the county court house in Stockton. Gas was discovered at 1800 feet when workers were digging a water well. The gas supplied heat and light for the court house and the Weber Swimming Baths. The Stockton Natural Gas Company was organized in 1888 by Jerome Haas. The company dug a total of 33 wells in the Stockton area and supplied gas to a number of industries and public institutions. In 1930 the PG & E began delivering gas from Kettleman Hills because of its high thermal quality. The Stockton Gas Company had become, through mergers, the Stockton Gas and Electric Company.

The first electric lights came to Stockton about 1884 when the Stockton Gas Company installed two arc dynamos in the P.A. Buell Planing Mill. The company erected a new powerhouse in 1889 to operate the city street cars. In 1895, two engines fueled by natural gas supplied the power to drive the generators.

Other gas companies developed in many towns



A gas lamp similar to the lamps used on the streets of San Francisco. The Lamplighter would go up and down the streets at dusk, lighting the lamps.

Sketch by Elsie Leary

Let There Be Light and Power, cont.

and cities in Northern California. Among these were in Sacramento, Marysville, San Jose, Oakland, Nevada City, Grass Valley, Vallejo, Napa, San Rafael, and Eureka. All were small gas plants providing lighting for each city.

The histories of the many local companies are related in "PG & E of California" written by Charles M. Coleman and published by McGraw Hill Book Company, Inc. in 1952. Other records are presently being catalogued but will be available in the next year at Bancroft Library in Berkeley.

During the Civil War the Union army sought a better gas for their observation balloons. Washington called upon Professor Thaddeus Lowe who made an exhaustive study and came up with the Lowe carbureted water-gas process in the years

1872-1875. This new method of producing gas improved the illumination and changed the development of California gas utilities. The method was first employed in California in San Jose in 1877. Professor Lowe organized the United Gas Improvement Company in Philadelphia. This company came to San Francisco in search of business and acquired a lease with the Central Gaslight Company in 1883. In San Francisco in 1884 a group of men formed the Pacific Gas Improvement Company which bought the California and Arizona holdings of United Gas Improvement Co. This company also purchased the San Francisco Gas & Electric Company in 1903. The successor in this merger was— PG & E.

Funding for the printing of this quarterly issue of the San Joaquin Historian was provided through a generous grant from American Savings Bank, F.A.

AMERICAN SAVINGS

Stockton

222 North El Dorado Street south of Miner • (209) 943-3355
1607 West March Lane west of Pershing • (209) 478-3188
343 East Main Street at Sutter • (209) 943-3365
902 East Hammer Lane at Hammertown Center • (209) 952-0980

Lodi

514 West Kettleman Lane • (209) 368-7187

Manteca

115 West Center Street • (209) 823-1741

Tracy

150 West 10th Street • (209) 835-7411

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We received a number of compliments on the Spring 1989 edition. Those compliments are heartily extended to the authors and to the Printing Technicians at American Savings. They make the Editor look good!

This issue represents a little different style of presentation. We hope to present a variety of historical subject matter covering the entire county, as well as a variety in the style of presentation. You, too, can help with your suggestions.

**San Joaquin County
Historical Society**
P.O. Box 21
Lodi, CA 95241

STOCKTON/LODI CONVENTION CENTER
46 West Fremont Street
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