

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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SOCIETY NEWS

Meeting at Micke Memorial Building on January 28, at 8 P.M.

Program - Agricultural History of San Joaquin County, by Mr. Wesley C. Fleming, a former County Farm Advisor. Besides his personal knowledge of farming methods in years gone by, Mr. Fleming has done a great deal of research, and is now writing a book on the subject. This will be an outstanding meeting. Bring friends to enjoy it.

Remember the silent auction will be held at the next meeting. Bring articles no longer useful to you, but which some one else might like to bid on.

A revised edition of "Historic Spots in California", by Hoover and Rensch, is scheduled to be published this spring by Stanford University Press. The committee from our society helping to revise the chapter on San Joaquin County in this book are listing historic spots that would be of interest to travelers. If members know of any historic places that might be included, please notify Amy Boynton, chairman.

HISTORIC FACTS

As Members have asked for it, we are including a copy of the history of San Joaquin City, which was accepted by the California State Park Commission. The marker was dedicated by our Society on November 3, 1962.

SAN JOAQUIN CITY

San Joaquin City was a thriving frontier town a hundred years ago where now there are only farm buildings and a remnant of an early day burial ground.

Located on the west bank of the San Joaquin River it was the down river city of a group of river towns on the San Joaquin River and its tributaries, the Stanislaus and the Tuolumne. All of these cities were in the southern portion of the Pescadero land grant of the Mexican period and, for the most part, had their inception in the four years 1846-1850, when California was an independent republic.

San Joaquin City was founded in 1849 and was about ten miles south of the present town of Banta. It was on the old River Road now named Kasson Road. In the early 1850's when San Joaquin County boundaries were set, San Joaquin City was the only one of the river towns left in San Joaquin County.

A ferry known as Durham Ferry was established near San Joaquin City in 1850 by Titus and Manley and the town grew rapidly as a

trading center and a cross roads town. As head of navigation for the numerous river boats, it drew freight and passenger trade from the river. Stage and freight travel from the west crossed the ferry on the way to the Southern Mines or headed north to Stockton by the old Durham Ferry Road.

The City soon had two hotels, two general merchandise stores, a barber shop, a bakery, a laundry, a blacksmith shop, livery stables, seven saloons, and a church, the San Joaquin River Plains Baptist Church. In July 1851, a post office, San Joaquin, was opened in San Joaquin City with Richard M. Harmer as first postmaster. According to Thompson & West's "History of San Joaquin County, 1879", in speaking of San Joaquin City, "It was hoped in those days that it might be possible to make this point a rival to Stockton."

Trade between San Francisco and the Mother Lode and the Southern Mines brought much activity to the flourishing town, but even more important was the development of grain growing and cattle raising in the surrounding area. Huge warehouses and wharfs were built at the water front for storing and loading produce for shipment by river boat to Stockton and San Francisco. Early pictures show great stacks of sacked grain awaiting shipment and views of combined harvesters used in the large grain acreage of the vicinity.

The city grew in importance until the coming of the Martinez-Fresno Line of the Central Pacific Railroad in 1879 opened up the central West Side plains to rail service. The city now owed its existence to the river roads and stage and post routes to the east and up and down the river.

The high river and floods of 1911, when San Joaquin River broke into Laird Slough and cut a new channel, brought the beginning of the end for San Joaquin City. Because the river was from then on divided, a navigable channel could no longer be maintained. Thus ended over 60 years of the operations of the river boats, particularly the Mosquito Fleet of the San Joaquin River, though a few boats did make their way up as far as San Joaquin City as late as 1917.

Importance of San Joaquin City is due to its contribution to economic development of an interior agricultural area in the first years of statehood, to the part it played in early day trade between the Bay Area and the inner valley and the mines, and to the fact that it was one of the towns of an era of the past when river navigation was of primary importance in trade and communication