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Circuit Rider

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S. P WOULD ABANDON FELTON DEPOT

The Southern Pacific is sending out feelers to learn how much opposition it will encounter to a proposal to abandon the Felton depot. No proposal for abandonment has yet been made to the state railroad commission.

The depot, in existence since the branch line to Boulder Creek was built 60 years ago, now serves as little more than a place for the Pacific Aggregates company and the Kaiser interests to bill out their sand and gravel from the nearby pits, and as a place on the railroad time card to which express and freight rates are figured.

CITY BOND TAX WILL DROP THIS YEAR

Property owners in Santa Cruz can look forward to a drop of at least one cent, and perhaps of two, in the municipal tax rate this coming year.

Last year the council, with \$48,377 to pay on principal and interest on \$409,050 in outstanding bonds, levied 41 cents on the \$100 of assessed valuation, which gave it somewhat in excess of \$50,000.

This year, with \$378,000 in outstanding bonds, the city will need \$47,025 for payments of principal and interest.

With the carry-over of around \$2000 from last year's levy, this year's rate for bond payments might be dropped as low as 39 cents, and still put more than the necessary \$47,025 in the treasury.

ADMINISTRATIVE CUTS ARE NOT LIKELY

With salary demands and other costs rising no cut in the city tax rate of \$1.50 for administrative purposes (the legal limit at which the city's tax has stood for several years) is likely.

The municipal rate will be the \$1.50 for administrative purposes, 10 cents for the library, 10 cents for the erosion control fund plus whatever is needed for bond payments.

The city fathers are investigating the feasibility of a refunding bond issue which would cut interest charges on the outstanding bonds from the present five per cent (except on the auditorium issue on which they are two and a half) to around two or two and a half per cent. Such an expedient, if the form of the bonds makes refunding legally possible, might save the municipality around \$6500 a year.

AMERICAN ALCALDES MADE LAND GRANTS

Civil government was quite a problem in Santa Cruz in the four years between the time the United States flag was raised in 1846 and the state organization set up by the first legislature in San Jose in 1850.

Mexican law was still in effect and "American alcaldes" dispensed justice, wrote laws and dispensed grant lands with a broad interpretation of their powers. Joseph L. Majors, selected by vote of the Santa Cruzans, was appointed by Walter Colton, the Monterey alcalde, but Majors had married one of the Castro girls and resigned when he found himself embarrassed at having to adjudicate affairs of his wife's brothers-in-law.

His place was taken by William Blackburn, the Virginia carpenter who kept the post until gold was discovered and male Santa Cruzans generally left for the Sacramento valley.

The office of alcalde was passed rapidly from Blackburn to William Anderson, the British sailor, into Majors' hands again, to John James of Soquel, to John Pinkham and finally to A. A. Hecox, the Methodist exhorter.

The alcaldes apparently each designated his successor in the effort to keep a fountain head of justice operating in the old two-story adobe on the upper plaza which, under Majors' ownership, had become known as the Eagle hotel.

Last of the American alcaldes

was Hecox, who surrendered his office to the appointed county officers in the early summer of 1850.

JOSEPH MAJORS GOT OUR HIGH SCHOOL SITE

By their own interpretation of Mexican law the American alcaldes decided they had authority to grant "house lots" and "growing lots" and those portions of the mission lands not already contained in Mexican grants were passed out to any applicants.

On April 1, 1848, while Blackburn was officiating as alcalde, Majors tendered a request for a tract which is today the site of our high school. For the 200 varras he paid \$15 filing fee.

Majors, however, had his home on Rancho Refugio, the grant just west of the present city given in Mexican days to his wife and two of her sisters. Some time in the next two years after acquiring his 200 varra lot he sold it.

The purchaser was Thomas Hollenback, of whom records show no more than that he served on several juries for Alcalde Hecox in the first three months of 1850 and that on January 1, 1852, sold his land to Asa Gifford.

An article in the Sentinel in 1884 from the pen of Duncan McPherson is authority for the fact that Hollenback built a home on what is our present high school site. The article added that it passed from Hollenback's possession into that of Asa Gifford, that it was later occupied by James Morgan and then became the property of Thomas Jefferson Weeks.

The house (it was still standing in 1884) was described as low, built of hewn timber.

WAS BOUGHT IN 1852

Hollenback's deed of January 1, 1852, copy of which is in volume one of deeds in the county recorder's office, undoubtedly marked his departure.

Asa Gifford, the purchaser, followed his acquisition of a home and farm by sending for his wife, Marietta, and a son who were waiting in Elgin, Illinois. Before their arrival he decided on a larger farm in Scotts valley, and on September 18, 1852, sold his ranch to T. J. Weeks, who had been living on Beach Hill in the cabin of a wrecked ship and growing potatoes on Blackburn's land in the flat.

Gifford paid \$2500 to Hollenback for the tract but had added to it by purchase of an additional ten acres on the flat below, a strip today running approximately from Lincoln street to Laurel, so that his sale price of \$4000 to Weeks probably represented no profit.

The Sentinel's statement of 1884 that James W. Morgan and his family occupied the house is explained by the fact that Weeks had married Morgan's daughter and undoubtedly installed his father-in-law's family in the house.

In the spring of 1853 Asa Gifford's wife and son arrived from Illinois to find that he had died a violent but mysterious death in Scotts valley. Both suicide and murder were suspected.

The widow identified her husband's body and stayed in California. On December 14, 1853, she was married in Santa Clara to the Rev. T. W. Hinds, who had two years before established the first Congregational church in Santa Cruz. Hind's first wife had died while crossing the plains and been buried in the sink of the Humboldt. He died here in 1870 but his widow, Marietta, lived on California street until 1905.

MANSION OF 1886 STILL STANDS

Thomas Jefferson Weeks was a native of Wayne, Maine, who with two brothers came to California in 1849 and was in Santa Cruz in time to be on the poll list for the first election, in the spring of 1850. His brothers, Bartlett V. and Braddock W., settled at Pescadero where they were land owners and proprietors of a store operated by Nelson Besse when, in 1855, Sam Brannan laid out the town.

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Braddock, however, spent several years with his brother Thomas in Santa Cruz and in 1854 was one of the bidders on constructions of a bridge across the "laguna de la playa" (the present outlet from the Neary lagoon) which was the first bridge built in Santa Cruz county. It was part of the road from Anthony's wharf on Beach Hill to the stand of redwoods on what is now the Wilder ranch which furnished lumber for most of the buildings erected here in the fifties.

Thomas J. Weeks was successful as a farmer and business man. In 1886 he tore down the old house and spent \$7000—a large sum for those days—on a mansion on the present high school site. On Taylor street was his huge barn; below were orchards; on Walnut avenue was the spring house accessible to the passerby.

The mansion still stands, on California street opposite Otis, where it was moved in 1894 to make way for the \$35,000 wooden high school building which burned in 1912.