

# MEMOIRS Of J. Gilbert Triplett

(Ed. Note: This is the second installment of the memoirs of J. Gilbert Triplett of Ben Lomond, who came to this area with his family over sixty years ago. This series of memoirs which will be four installments long, deals only with Mr. Triplett's memories of the 1890's — a time which well reflects early life and customs in the San Lorenzo Valley. The entire story is Mr. Triplett's own work and the first installment which appeared last week dealt with his fatiguing, yet amusing journey to this part of the country. If anyone interested, missed last week's chapter, they may secure

an extra copy or copies at the Valley Sun office.)

## PART II

### FELTON IN EARLY NINETIES

We drove back to Zayante, arriving at the Felton Railroad Station on November 10, 1891. We camped at a house next to the Zayante bridge and just across from the Boulder Creek railroad track which ran along the last property line which is now Felton Grove.

At that time it was just an open field, and we turned the horses in the field for the night. About 8 o'clock the old night freight known as Engine No. 13, came down from Boulder Creek

and Ben Lomond with 40 or 50 cars loaded with wood and lumber. The glaring headlights combined with the noise frightened the horses and they all ran for the gate and broke through. The engine knocked five of them off the track and killed Mage, our best saddle horse and again the whole family found reason to cry as we all loved him too.

Old Major or Mage as we called him, was a Utah horse. We had brought him from Utah to Modoc in 1885. He was the best all round saddle horse a man ever straddled, with no exceptions. He would hold anything you would throw a rope on. To

drive a critter through a gate or to separate one from a herd all you had to do was to stick on if you could stick, and he would do the rest. He never did fall with any of us no matter how slippery or rough the ground was.

Well, I was 16 years old two days later, was 4 ft. 8 in height and weighed 64 pounds. That was the heaviest for me up to that time.

We stayed in the aforesaid house until father got the house built on the ranch. My sister, Maud and I started to school at Felton. When the teacher asked me what grade I was in, I said I did not know as they did not have any grades up north. I had been through all of the California State books, but would like

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to start back in fractions. She said that was in the seventh grade, so that was where I started. After two weeks the teacher said I could go into the eighth grade, but I said no, I wanted to understand what I was studying, so continued on through seventh, eighth, and ninth. When I started in the seventh grade there were 14 in the class, and when we graduated there were only three of us: Lucy Ball, Bell Hayes and myself; the others having dropped out, most of them after the seventh grade.

The teachers at different times were Miss Cappleman of Santa Cruz, Miss Myrtle Hoff of Santa Barbara, Miss Mildred Cox of Santa Cruz, teaching the larger room and Miss Chase and Miss Brown in the small room. Our class was the first class to graduate in Felton. Mr. D. C. Clark, principal of the Santa Cruz High School at that time, spoke and gave out the diplomas. He substituted for the County Superintendent of Schools, Mr. J. W. Linscott.

When father got the house built it was the first and only house between the Felton Station and the old Ranch house a mile further on north. Bill Strode and his wife lived there, and had a man who milked about 20 cows and made cheese, with Mr. Strode doing the farming and teaming. There was Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kenville and family of two girls and three boys, Carry, Grace, Grant, Frank and Everet, who owned what is now called the Quail Hollow Ranch and now owned by Mr. L. W. Lane, Publisher of the Sunset Magazine. Mr. Kenville must have been a mighty good farmer, as he made a good living, mostly off the ranch, had a nice orchard and vineyard. He raised corn, hay, vegetables, chickens, and with a nice meadow pasture they milked five or six cows and made butter, had a nice home, out-buildings and so on, and every thing was kept in first class condition.

Then at the forks of the Zayante and Lompico creeks there were several families, a Blacksmith shop, cook house, and the Zayante School house. A Miss Josefa Buelna of a well to do Spanish family of Santa Cruz, taught at that school house for 30 years until she retired.

There was a railroad switch from the main line at Eccles where they took on and off passengers, and I am not sure, but think there was a Post Office at Eccles. There was still quite a lot of teaming, shipping wood and split stuff, on further north on Zayante.

Up above the R. R. tracks near the first R.R. tunnel was Mr. Solomon Kenville with three boys, Paul, Lew and Jack and two girls whose names I have forgotten. They had a big wood ranch with a nice vineyard and winery, also a variety of fruit trees from which they shipped

at 25c per plate.

There were two hotels: The Grand Central, owned by Wm. Hayes, and the Creamer Hotel, later called Felton Hotel, owned by Mrs. Creamer. There was a Blacksmith shop owned by Emphry Rubottom and Jack Roundtree; a Barber Shop owned by Frank Rodriguez. There were three saloons besides the two hotel bars. Owner of the Saloons were George Ley Sr., Pat Hicky and "Cap." Caplatzi. Costella's Chalet now stands at the site of Caplatzi's place. The Alcazar Dance Hall was where Roy's Market is now.

The Church was in the same location as now. The school house was on the hill near the cemetery. There were two rooms and two teachers, and about seventy five pupils. Of these pupils, the only ones still around Felton, as far as I know, are Manuel Silvey, Frank Capelli, Del Simmons, George Rubottom, Mrs. Bessie Glass and Annie Ley. These pupils were much younger than I.

Felton was quite a lively town, with the two lime kilns: the Holms Kilns one and a half miles up the Ice Cream grade and the Cowell Kilns up Fall Creek. The two lime warehouses were on the property across the highway from the present school house. Also located there were the railroad switch tracks from where they shipped wood and lime. The railroad came in from the main line south of the railroad bridge just below the Big Trees.

The first ball grounds were in the field south of the old Covered Bridge on the west side of the river. When the present bridge was being built in the year 1892, horse teams had to ford the river just north of the bridge, and for heavy loads they went through the George Ley fields and came out over the bridge north of Felton where is now the entrance to Rose Acres Dude Ranch.

Of the many teams that were coming in and out of Felton there were five or six five-horse teams making four trips daily hauling lime from the Holms Kilns and as many or more teams hauling from the IXL or Cowell Kilns. In the afternoons the big wood teams would come by the school house with their four, five or six-horse teams with one or two wagons loaded up to the last stick they could pile on as the teamsters would each one try to haul the biggest loads and they were loads too, five or six cords to each wagon.

Of the crack teamsters that I remember the best were George Featherston, George Clement, Tom and Dick Rountree, Tom Kelley, Joe Montgomery, and the grand daddy of them all Bill Foreman, who was rated as being the very best.

During tan bark season, they hauled the tan bark to the tannery at Santa Cruz, and with those big loads and the team bells on the leaders, they strung out down the Toll Road one team behind the other and it was a pretty sight and something we will never see again. Then they

up above the R. R. tracks near the first R.R. tunnel was Mr. Solomon Kenville with three boys, Paul, Lew and Jack and two girls whose names I have forgotten. They had a big wood ranch with a nice vineyard and winery, also a variety of fruit trees from which they shipped quite a lot of fruit.

On further north a few miles was the Swinford Ranch which consisted of a big vineyard and winery where they made the finest of wines. They too had a large family.

There was plenty of game, that is rabbits, quail, squirrel and of course deer. Although the hunters used hound dogs to chase the deer and for that reason they were not seen out in the open as much as they are now, there was no trouble to find something to shoot at. Many a time I would shoot a cotten tail from the back steps, and a quail now and again; there being no game laws then that I knew of.

At the Felton R. R. Station Mr. Benj. Lloyd was agent. There was also a freight agent whose name I do not recall. George Clement had the Big Tree Ranch, milked about 20 cows, farmed and had a big six horse team and hauled wood.

Then between the R.R. track and Zayante Creek, a Mr. Talbott had a home and Dairy Barn where he milked thoroughbred Jersey cows and they were beauties. They delivered milk to Felton, Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek. His ranch is now owned by Miss Annie Ley.

Felton had two stores: Jacob Stein's and a smaller one owned by Frank West. West also had the Wells Fargo agency and met all trains for baggage and so on.

Wallace Drew had the Livery Stable, with his passenger bus carried the mail and passengers to and from the station and was also town constable. His wife operated a boarding house and gave midnight dinners for the dances. She was noted for the chicken dinners, with pie and all the trimmings; all you could eat

best. During tan bark season, they hauled the tan bark to the tannery at Santa Cruz, and with those big loads and the team bells on the leaders, they strung out down the Toll Road one team behind the other and it was a pretty sight and something we will never see again. Then there were four and five yoke ox teams hauling wood off of the steep hillsides and down the toll road and on over the hill to the Cowell Lime Kilns north of Santa Cruz.

Along the Toll Road grade it was a one way road a good part of the way with turn outs every so often and the empty teams had to pull out and let the loaded teams pass.

In 1892 father traded two other properties in and near Lookout for twenty five head of horses, they being delivered down to Chico, and he going up and driving them down from there. There being so much teaming to do, there was no trouble to sell the horses, however he kept enough to make up two four-horse teams.

There was lots of oak and bull pine on the ranch and father, of course, had it cut and sold it. He made a contract with the Santa Cruz Electric Light Co. for 450 cords of the bull pine wood at \$4.50 per cord delivered to their plant which was on Pacific Avenue. (They used it in the steam boiler for generating the electricity). Then after finishing that contract, he made another contract for 375 cords at \$3.75 per cord. It cost \$1.50 per cord for cutting so only left a small margin for hauling, to say nothing for stumpage.

After I got through school in June 1893 we hauled with two teams. Father drove a four-horse team and I drove five on the other wagon and we hauled about eight and a half cords per trip and it was a full days work, with one man helping us.

We finished up the contracts in October and January 1st, 1895 we moved to Ben Lomond.

(Continued Next Week)