Watsonville (Calif.) Register-Pajaronian, Wednesday, July 2, 1952



VAQUERO-Tom Arano, now nearly 100 years old, is the last of the cowboys who once rode the valley. More than a decade ago, after a Fourth parade, he paused for this shot in the plaza.

First Crops Brought Name Spud Valley local trees were dug up and re- famed "Banner" brand berry made

It isn't all apples and lettuce in \$100 an acre rent for their land.

the Pajaro valley. that must get the credit for the market, California had more postart of agriculture here-"acre tatoes than it could eat. The smart

of the first crop planted by J. ahead and sacked their crop, lost Bryant Hill in 1851, on 1,000 acres their shirts and quit after their the Sal-si-puedes rancho, brief fling at being farmers. leased from Don Manuel Jimeno. commercially in the valley up to and began again-usually with that time.

of the search for gold, were willing Another early writer recalls one ton to the acre and sold for area, and in 1896 driers handled By 1900, some 700 of the value one ton to the acre and sold for area, and in 1896 driers handled by 1900, some 700 of the value one ton to the acre and sold for area, and in 1896 driers handled by 1900, some 700 of the value of the search for gold, were willing area. to turn to something else.

a while it was a profitable ven- the valley. These machines could to supply the entire state. ture. Spuds were selling for 16 cents a pound in San Francisco. and the newcomers could make money even if they had to pay

Then the bottom dropped out. Indeed it's the lowly potato The crop of 1853 flooded the for acre the richest spot on earth." ones let their spuds rot in the Potatoes made up a good part rich valley soil. Those who went

Nothing but cattle had been raised eventually made up their losses three months in this area.

doubts of Santa Cluz settlers, who of the Pajaronian speaks of vast hadn't thought much of the idea wheat fields between Castroville profitable gamble. There was later, Rodgers sold the fruit off planted in strawberries, the growof farming along the banks of the and Salinas, and the acres of grain danger in every step of the grow-the trees for \$1,800. Pajaro. Word of the bounty of the in between the orchards and berry ing, drying and pressing. But in valley spread north, to the dig- patches around Watsonville in 1881, one grower cleared \$25,000

sitting on a hillside above the \$1.15 a pound. They came to the Pajaro valley river, and seeing the smoke of 27 It was estimated that enough and planted more potatoes. For threshing machines operating in hops could be raised in the valley

Hill's rich crop laid to rest the An editorial in an early edition tention during the 1870's and 80's doubts of Santa Cruz settlers, who of the Pajaronian speaks of vast from a 20-acre crop that averaged planted in Petit prunes in this chest during the year.

put out 1,000 sacks of grain a Prunes were another crop that Those who were able to hold out day, and operated for as long as once caught the fancy of Pajaro the Watsonville Water Works had Another crop that attracted atprine trees, when he set out $4\frac{1}{2}$ ply of water for the heavy irrigative Santa Clara valley. Lately, and solve the 1870's and 80's valley orchardists. J. M. Rodgers is put in flumes from its Corralitos acres in 1882. When the orchard tion needed by the berries.

more than two million pounds of ley's acres were devoted to the around Davenport.

That was the year the prune market fell apart. Most of the It was in this area that

placed with apple orchards.

in the valley, and have consistent- its originators in the northwest ly paid good dividends since they by J. E. Reiter and D. J. Driscoll, were planted commercially in who set out their first stocks on

Regular shipments to San Francisco markets, however, didn't get going until 1880. The year before, in the central California area.

By 1894, there were 1,500 acres which ranged from \$11 to \$20

raising of strawberries, according to a crop report of the time.

its first appearance in 1904. The Strawberries were an early crop variety had been purchased from the Cassin ranch here.

> Strains of this original variety are now used almost exclusively

Berry acreage declined here into its own. Santa Cruz county's crop report for 1951 shows strawberries as the fourth most valuable crop, led only by apples, lettuce-and Brussels sprouts, a specialty of the coastal area

The report showed an estimated 500 acres of berries vielding a crop with an f.o.b. value of the \$1.895,000-nearly \$3.800 an acre.