



Pajaro's Chinatown was location of gambling dens of iniquity

Every once in awhile I hear people talk about the old Chinatown then located over in Pajaro — mostly on Brooklyn Street. It was here that fan-tan and the lottery were very evident and the following appeared in the Evening Pajaronian in 1925 concerning these games: "The expressionless oriental would sit at the head of the fan-tan board, which, as will be remembered by many, was composed of a square, each side of the square being numbered — either one, two, three or four. The Chinaman would take a handful of white buttons from a jar at his side, cast them in a heap upon the table, and slide a bronze or copper cup over them. The gamblers would then make their bets, placing their money upon whatever numeral they would and "fanning" it or not, as they pleased.

"The yellow man would lift the lid and silently begin counting the buttons in groups of four, this by means of a piece of thin curved bamboo. Those whose bets tallied with the last number of buttons, won. The game has broken many hearts, has elated some people; and a thousand griping stories are entwined in the fibers of fan-tan. It is an old game, many centuries old, a game the monarchs used to play. It has been banned in this country for many years. Now, instead of betting on a button, we smoke our Chesterfields, drink our malted milks, watch the movies, and, when the circumstances warrant, hold our fair one's hand.



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certainly had its share. The following is from the Evening Pajaronian in 1908: "District Attorney James Bardin led a raid on the gambling houses of Brooklyn arresting two Chinamen.

That was Watsonville

Gathering ten big bags of gambling paraphernalia and other gambling devises. Fan-tan seems to be flourishing here and this must cease said the D.A; the next time we come we will confiscate all gambling paraphernalia and if need be all of the gambling tables will be chopped to pieces."

"The lottery, perhaps, was the most colorful and alluring game for the stranger. Here one placed his money, marked out a given number of Chinese characters on the lottery ticket and awaited his doom or his making. His doom or making was contained in the sing-song voice of an Oriental who read the winning tickets. As he read, another would punch out the holes on the lottery tags. Those whose numbers differed, swallowed hard and went out for a breath of air. This game, like fan-tan, has been barred.

"Such was the Chinatown of old; such was its good and its bad influence. Thus it dreamed, gambled and lived but to die. It was as interesting as it was impractical." — from a 1925 article.

And how about today? Though different, we have lottery and many other forms of gambling such as casinos going up all over the country. Gambling has always been with us in one form or another and Watsonville has