

Aromas: friendly people, lovely scenery

"The new village of Aromas, near the Sandcut, is an up-to-date place. The young ladies of that place, and they are numerous and handsome, have a ladies riding club and they can be seen any Sunday afternoon riding their fleet horses over the Aromas countryside, visiting different friends. A stranger meeting them on the road would take them for a female military regiment so gracefully do they sit on their steeds and so orderly are all their movements."

That was Watsonville

This appeared in the Pajaronian in March of 1895, but let's go back to 1835 when Governor Castro granted Aromitas to Juan Maria Anzar who was to marry Maria Antonio Castro, daughter of General Jose Castro and heroine of the Rose of the Rancho, an early stage success. Architect William Weeks later purchased the former Anzar property and built a summer home on the adobe's old foundation.

By the 1880s, a few settlers had homes dotting the hills. Cattle roamed over the countryside and orchards were planted along with a few berry patches. In 1894 J.W. Dunlop of Gilroy opened a store and the Rufus Hawkins family moved to the small settlement.

Located in three counties — Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito — Aromas could boast of an apple drying business run by the Chinese and became noted for their delicious apricot crops. In 1905, Floyd Hawkins became the Southern Pacific agent at the Aromas depot, having just married Alice Whereley



Betty Lewis

Local columnist

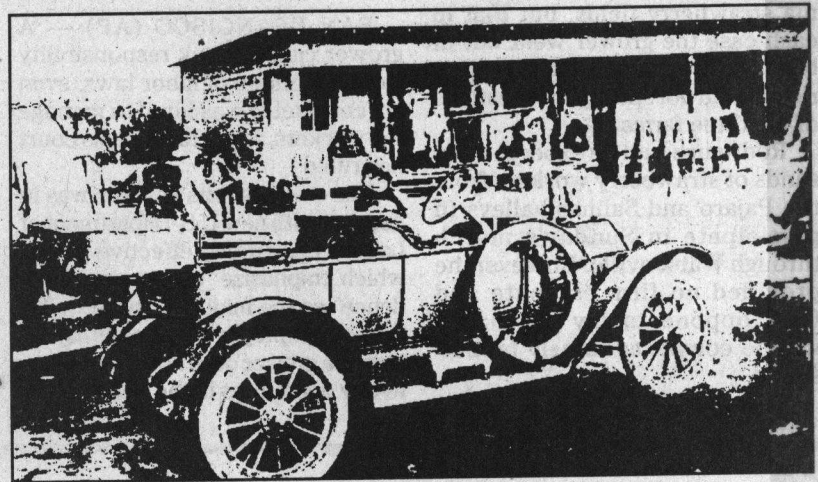
of San Jose.

On April 18, 1906, the sleepy little village was rudely awakened by the big quake and when the young Hawkins hurried down to the station, he found that it had collapsed. The railroad tracks were twisted, and cars of fruit had overturned.

The following is from the Evening Pajaronian, October, 1907: "Aromas is rapidly becoming one of the greatest apple growing sections in the Pajaro Valley. Over a hundred carloads of apples will be shipped from that district this season. M.N. Lettunich & Co. are running their packing house on their wonderfully productive farm to its full capacity. About a hundred people are employed on the property..."

In 1914, a branch of the Monterey County Free Library was installed at Aromas with Miss Lila Tobitt as librarian and the books were available at her home on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. A column ran in the Evening Pajaronian with the heading "Aromas Items" and was signed by Tutti Coughdrop!

Such pearls of wisdom sprang from the pages as: "Fred Cable threatens to start for his old home in Idaho — although this is a deeply religious community it is hard to



Albert Snyder

A 1912 Buick with 2-year-old Albert Snyder, sitting in front seat. Car is parked in front of Kortright Sotre (later site of Marshall's store) in Aromas.

down old Adam in some men ... It is rumored that our phlegmatic postmaster is getting a move-on, wonder what's up? ... Misses Bertha Slayton and Mrs. Lena Coats have departed for Gonzales where they are engaged to teach in the public schools at that place ... J. Moore has sold his butchering business to the Seeley Brothers, who, being wide-awake fellows, will make a big success of the business ..."

Aromas now has a very active library in the former school building with Jane Ward as the branch manager. The library just received a \$5,000 grant to be used for children's books and seniors are being enlisted to read to children at the library.

A number of businesses are thriving in Aromas, including the Granite Rock Co. whose roots go back

to the 1890s on land then belonging to the John T. Porter estate. "The Granite Rock Company has been shipping rock this week from its Logan switch quarry to the beet factory, Watsonville and to Salinas contractors." — The Pajaronian, May 20, 1897.

Many people who now work in other towns have found that living in Aromas is much to their liking — a beautiful little town and countryside that has a charm all of its own and very friendly people. We try and attend the Aromas Grange breakfast the last Sunday of the month as often as we can and you are sure to be served great food and meet some very nice and neighborly people.