

Home for boys Valley Church once

By BETTY LEWIS

"In the close vicinage of Watsonville there is an excellent institution for the care of orphaned boys, where the mental, physical, moral and religious training of these young and unfortunate wards of society is seen in a manner highly creditable at once to the state, to the good fathers in charge, and to the noble order of which they are members." — 1890 report.

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The orphan asylum was located on 260 acres of land where the Valley Catholic Church, cemetery and other facilities are now located. The first church was built in 1854 on a site chosen by the Rev. P. De Vos, Jesuit missionary sent here from the college that had recently been organized at Santa Clara. In 1869 the orphanage was built on land donated by Mrs. Prudenciana de Amesti and her daughters Mrs. Celedonia Arano, Mrs. Carmen A. Kinlay, Mrs. Santos A. Pinto and Mrs. Tomasa M. Mendia. The church land had been donated by William F. White and Eugene Kelly.

The state paid to the institution, engaged in the care of orphans, the \$100 a year for the support and education of each "whole" orphan, and \$75 for that of each "half" orphan, or those who had lost one parent only. The surviving parents of half orphans were expected to contribute according to their means. An annual collection was taken up in the Catholic churches throughout the diocese for contribution to the asylum, while voluntary contributions of money or necessities from persons benevolently inclined were given and thankfully received.

The asylum or college buildings and the church were located on the summit of a high knoll; the greater part of the property was rented with a sufficient amount reserved for extensive playgrounds and for the raising of vegetables—some two acres were devoted to this purpose. The study or classrooms were four in number, large, airy and well ventilated. The dormitories, with their long lines of beds, were located in the upper portion of the building. The dining room or refectory was neat and orderly. The adjacent kitchen held a large range, cooking utensils and appliances as well as the bakery out of which a barrel and a half of flour were consumed daily. People from Watsonville donated many fresh products to the orphanage as well as the womenfolk coming out on holiday to prepare meals for the boys.

The Rev. A. Roussel founded the asylum which was the forerunner of the St. Francis School. In 1874, Bishop Amat of Monterey gave the orphanage into the keeping of Franciscan fathers from the mission at Santa Barbara. Fathers Francisco Cardinna and Francisco Sanchez, along with Brother Joseph O'Malley, were sent up to take charge. In 1886, the Rev. Clementine Deymann was appointed director and he promoted the work of the orphanage with such zeal that the number of wards was tripled in 10 years.

Father Clementine personally attended to the religious instructions, and to "inculcating into the youthful minds the noble principles of Christianity and the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church." He was a good disciplinarian — mild but firm. One of the

rules of this model institution was that the boys were always under the watchful eye of a brother or other officer; they were never left alone whether in the playground, dining room, dormitory or classrooms. The father director was a native of Germany, coming to America in 1863 at the age of 18. In 1886 he arrived in California and received his education for the priesthood in this country with the Franciscan Fathers.

In the center of the grounds was an elevated tank holding 10,000 gallons of water, pumped by steam-power from the lake below (College), which was used for sprinkling the grounds, washing, and fire protection. Water for cooking was drawn from a large well and stored in a 5,000 gallon

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site of orphanage

tank built in the same elevated tower, under the large tank. In addition to these there were two other wells, sunk to a depth of 80 feet.

In 1890 there were 221 boys on the roster; including a number of students whose expenses were paid by relatives (the boys were not all orphans or subjects of charity). The war years went hard with the institution and, in 1919, the Franciscans turned the orphanage and church back to the Most Rev. John Cantwell, bishop of what was then the Los Angeles-Monterey-Fresno diocese. A new Church of the Immaculate Heart had been built in 1902, about the time the orphanage took up the additional burden of caring for troublesome boys who

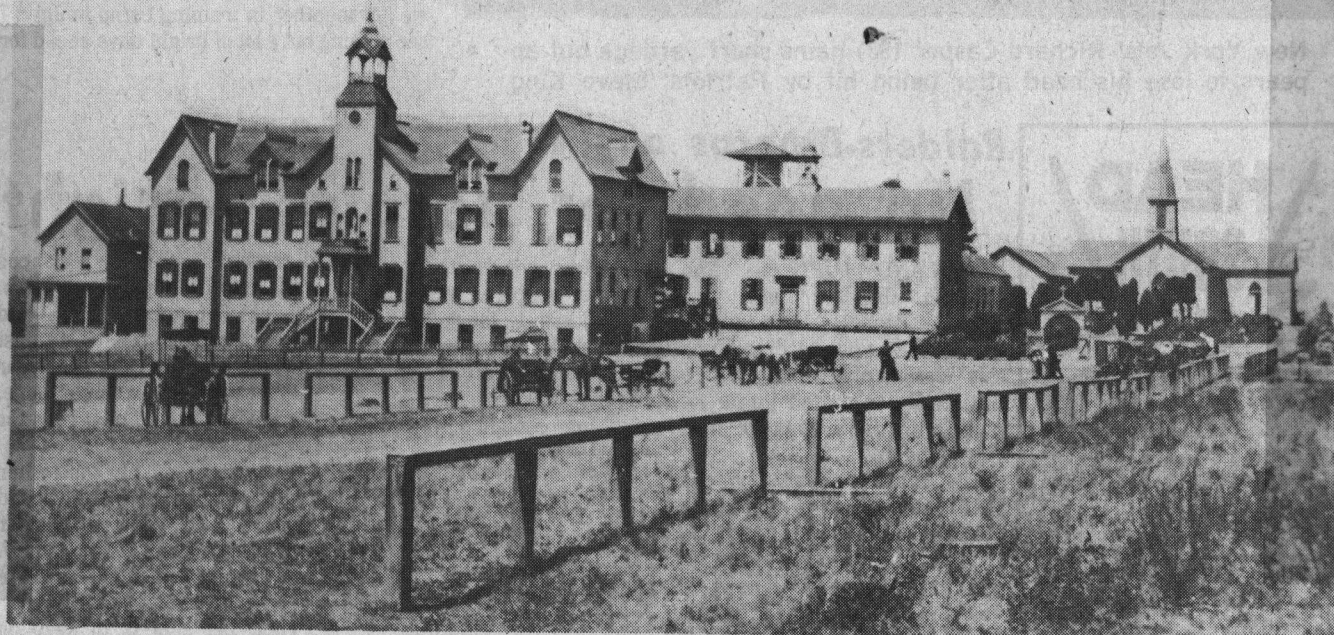
had become wards of the state. The old, wooden church burned in 1927 along with the newer one, the Sisters' convent and the old school buildings. The community responded to the emergency and a new church and convent were built across the road.

Many boys passed through the doors of the orphanage and from many parts of the state. A lingering memory of an institution that no longer exists in the Pajaro Valley.

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"The boys at the Pajaro Valley orphan asylum were given their annual Thanksgiving dinner last Thursday. A bountiful supply of 'good things of the table' were sent in by friends"—1898 news report.

REFERENCE



The orphanage (above) as it appeared about the turn of the century; it was located on the grounds of Valley Catholic Church and cemetery; following a disastrous fire in 1927, St. Francis

School was moved across the street and rebuilt. Picture below as taken in yard at "new" St. Francis School during an exercise period for the boys. (About 1930.)

