

William Pajaro King

First White Child Born in Valley

As if it was not interesting enough that William Pajaro King was the first white child born in the Pajaro Valley—Oct. 14, 1852—and probably in Santa Cruz county, there is a sidelight to his life, almost as interesting, revealed in an interview published in the San Francisco Bulletin, Feb. 1, 1919.

King, without boasting about it, said he was the nephew of the great Sarah Bernhardt, then the

world's leading tragedienne, making a stage tour of this country and Canada.

King said the great actress was the sister of his father, Kingsley King, who was born in New York state of Canadian parents. Kingsley King came to California in 1851, when his sister would have been six years old. The rest of the family is believed to have moved to Rochester, Iowa, where the sister grew up.

Her real name was Sarah, but the town remembered her by the nickname "Sál" after she ran away at the age of 16.

This part of the story was confirmed, according to the Bulletin, by a Fred Finefield, of Rochester, son of another King sister and therefore Pajaro King's cousin.

The biographies of Bernhardt's life are obscure up to the time she was 16, and was winning prizes in dramatic school in France. Finefield said the girl had learned fluent French, from her Canadian parents, before she ran away.

Even Bernhardt's own stories of her life make no direct mention of the names of her parents and grandparents.

Pajaro King, then a watchman at the Angel Island immigration station, told the Bulletin reporter his father, Kingsley King, had always maintained that Bernhardt was his sister.

"And father was a man who could be relied upon," said Pajaro King.

Native Sons Gave History Group Start

The Pajaro Valley Historical association was organized April 23, 1940, sponsored by the Native Sons of the Golden West. The first meeting was called by a committee of that organization, of which Jarvis McGowan was chairman.



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