

# When San Jose Was Young

A Series of Interesting Articles of An Historical Nature Prepared Especially for The News by a Well Known Author and Journalist.

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LOST- A MISSION SITE

Historians have always declared that the first site of the Santa Clara Mission was in the Laurel Wood on the banks of the Guadalupe as it flows through the Donahu ranch. Here it was, they say, that the first cross in the valley was planted. Here it was blessed. Here the bells ringing from the trees summoned the Indians to worship the new God. Here the first touchingly crude little Mission remained till the flood of the Guadalupe drove the worshippers to the new site.

In the early days, everyone knew precisely the location of the Mission site, but no one thought to mark it. The fathers drifted away or died. The first settlers departed, and finally only Marcello, the old Indian who died in September, 1875, knew where was the first site of the Mission. Few thought to obtain the knowledge from Marcello.

Two years ago the Historical Society of Santa Clara County determined to dig out of the past the secret of the site. They found that so far as they could learn, Marcello had told three persons, Mr. Charles Day, Mr. Thomas Leonard and Mr. Joseph Fenton. Under the leadership of Dr. Osborne, the members of the Historical Society with the camera made a pilgrimage of discovery. With them they took Mr. Charles Day, who had known Marcello.

Mr. Day was for years the gardener at the Santa Clara Mission. He thought he was certain that he remembered precisely where the Mission had been.

At the entrance to the Laurel Wood Farm the Historical Society said to Mr. Day, "Now, lead us to the spot."

All eagerly followed Mr. Day. He led them to the bank of the river. He looked about. "Yes, here are the young laurels shooting up from the old, here is the mound. This is the first Mission site."

There was a hush of reverence. The

Historical Society felt like Christopher Columbus. They posed for their pictures. The camera clicked, and the re-discovery of the site was registered. Some were in favor of having a tablet erected immediately stating that this was the exact site of the Santa Clara Mission. Wiser heads were in favor of less hasty action.

"No, let's be perfectly sure. Let's send for Tom Leonard."

Thomas Leonard was a rancher living at Aptos. He knew Marcello. Marcello had told Thomas Leonard exactly where the site was.

"Yes, let's send for Tom Leonard. If he agrees with Charles Day, we'll put up the discovery tablet immediately."

The Historical Society sent for Mr. Leonard. He arrived from Aptos and led the historians of the county on a second pilgrimage. Again all stood at the entrance to Laurel Wood Farm. Mr. Leonard led the way, but not the way trod by them when Mr. Day had conducted them to the original Mission site. Perhaps Mr. Leonard was mistaken. Perhaps he would change direction. But, no, he stopped one-half of a mile south of the Charles Day site. He looked around.

"Yes," he said, "here are the young laurel trees growing up from the old. Here is the mound. This is where Marcello said the old Mission stood."

The camera was not taken from its case. No photograph is necessary to visualize the chagrin of the members of the Historical Society.

Then Mr. Joseph Fenton, manager of the Douarte brick yard, was consulted. Fenton knew Marcello when a boy and as a young man. Probably better than any living person he recalls Marcello. Mr. Leonard and Mr. Day were each sure that Mr. Fenton would agree with them.

But Mr. Fenton agreed with neither. He denied that the first Mission site was on the Laurel Wood Farm. It

was just over the line on the Fenton ranch which bounds the Donahu property. Mr. Fenton's site is half a mile north of Mr. Day's site. Which is correct, Mr. Day, Mr. Leonard or Mr. Fenton?

There are several ways, says Doctor Osborne, of finding the original site. The first structure was very flimsy, there was no foundation of stone. One might learn much by excavations. Underneath perhaps ten feet of earth on one of the three sites will undoubtedly be found crucifixes, beads or old utensils. Better still may be located part of a cable chain that was brought from Yerba Buena to anchor a tree which crossed the creek, serving as a bridge. During the first rainy seasons the tree was washed down stream. Finally it was so anchored that even when it was dislodged temporarily it was put back in place. This bridge was but a few feet from the Mission site.

One should not abandon hope of locating definitely the original site of the Santa Clara Mission. Perhaps there is some one living who, despite the changing river and falling tree, can tell where is the lost site. If there is such a place, would he kindly communicate with the Evening News?