

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.

NO. 67 WAR IN THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY

PART II

During those years the increase of the Americans in numbers, their energy, their aggressiveness, their arrogance alarmed the Spanish Californians. In 1846, when Captain Fremont came with Kit Carson and 62 men, rumors were everywhere that this was the advance guard of the American army.

Fremont first visited San Jose in 1846, when he arrived by way of Alviso with William Huxley of San Francisco to visit the quicksilver mine at Almaden, the discovery of which had caused such a sensation to the government at Washington. He reported that it was worth \$10,000.

The day Fremont left Yerba Buena for Almaden the Mexican government officials at Yerba Buena notified United States Consul Thomas Larkin of the fact. The officials asked why armed troops had been brought into the department without permission, and why Fremont was here.

Through the consul, Fremont explained that he had come for his government to survey a practicable route to the Pacific. He had left his soldiers on Kern river, and on the frontier of the department to rest themselves and the animals. He had come from Monterey to buy clothing and provisions for his men and horses. When he should finish this work, he declared he intended to continue his journey to Oregon. He said this in the presence of Alvarado and Jose Castro.

The answer was forwarded to Governor Pico, and to the supreme government.

From the testimony of those present it does not appear that permission was given Fremont to enter into the San Joaquin Valley, but doubtless that consent was understood.

A few days later Fremont rode into San Jose from Monterey. He did not remain long, but on February 15 he went to Laguna Seca, then owned by the Fishers. Today the Laguna Seca is the site of Coyote. Kit Carson and all of Fremont's force who had been waiting for him on Kern river and later at Stockton joined Fremont at Laguna Seca. Here they remained in camp for some time, and even today one hears echoes of the maraudings which stirred bitterness in the hearts of the Spanish Californians. As one follows the path of Fremont down the Monterey road one finds circumstan-

tial evidence of his misdeeds.

The Chiboyas of Tully Road, great people at the time Fremont was in the valley, tell of the fear inspired by Fremont's men, and of their brutality. Women and children hid in the tubs, while the Americans slaughtered cattle and drove away horses for which only promises to pay were given. The Bernis add that Fremont's men took 200 horses from the Santa Teresa ranch and robbed them of blankets and bedding without even a slip of paper in payment. When confronted at Laguna Seca by young Antonio Bernis Fremont refused to give up the finest of the Bernis horses, the favorite saddle horse of Don Bruno Bernis. However when Captain Charles M. Weber who took the horses, was threatened with death by Antonio Bernis he did a turn to the Bernis ten horses of the three hundred taken.

So it is not strange that history records that at the same time Alcalde Dolores Pacheco of San Jose, at the request of Sebastian Peralta of Los Gatos, issued a warrant for Fremont's arrest for having in his possession horses stolen from the Rinconada de Los Gatos. Peralta was ordered from Fremont's camp. In his official communication to Alcalde Pacheco, Fremont said that Peralta should have been glad to escape "without a horse whipping." This note Fremont asked the alcalde to forward to the governor.

By this time Fremont was not popular along the Monterey road. He moved on toward Monterey with his men. They camped at Alisal. While there Fremont's men visited the rancho of Don Angel Maria Castro, uncle of General Castro, and insulted one of the Castro daughters. The aged Don Angel defended his daughter, though Fremont's men threatened him with a pistol. The Americans left the Castro ranch March 2.

On the fifth of March an officer arrived in Fremont's camp with an order for him and his men to leave this department. Fremont was warned by General Castro that if he did not obey he would be attacked. These orders were sent immediately to Council Larkin at Monterey. They are the basis for the much discussed treachery of General Castro to Fremont.