BASEBALL BY THE BOARDS

By Edwin M. Eaton

From the collection of Edwin M. Eaton, Eaton was President of the Fresno County Historical Society from 1955 to 1966.

Sitting back comfortably in Fresno in easy chairs to watch a Big League baseball game in New York or Chicago on a television screen, today's younger fans may not realize that viewing games has not always been so simple.

Back in the days when there was no television nor even radio, Fresno's newspapers made it possible for baseball fans to watch the World's Series by means of electric play boards. The Fresno Morning Republican had a board on the balcony of its building at Tulare and Van Ness (now McMahan Furniture Co.). The Fresno Herald had a board on the Griffith-McKenzie (now Helm) Building at Fulton and Mariposa Streets. Even the Fresno Bee which came to Fresno only in 1922, for a time had a board on the south wall of its building at Van Ness and Calaveras, with benches for the use of baseball fans on the adjoining parking lot.

Oddly enough, these electric boards were a fairly satisfactory substitute for the more efficient means of reporting the games which came later with the invention of radio and television. By wire a play-by-play description of each game came in Morse code direct from the ball park. The receiving telegrapher wrote out his translations of the code and handed them to the electric board operator who pushed the appropriate buttons.

The Herald's board was a replica of a baseball diamond, with small electric lights at each base, at the pitcher's box and in left, center and right fields. When the pitcher had the ball, his light was on; when he threw it the batter's light at home plate lit up. If it was a strike, one of a group of three lights at the bottom of the board lit up; if a ball, one of the four lights in the ball group came on. If the batter hit to left field, the appropriate light glowed brightly. Another group of three lights indicated how many were out in the inning.

Beside the electric board was a list of the players in their batting order, with appropriate columns to indicate times at bat, runs, hits, errors, etc. As I recall, a man with a megaphone supplied whatever further details couldn't well be shown on the board.

The Bee's board, instead of electric lights, had manually operated players which were moved around to indicate their proper positions on the diamond. At times when the incoming wires became garbled, players might be stranded between bases until further details came over the wire.

As you sit comfortably watching the next World's Series, on television, think how much softer life is for you than for the baseball fans of yesterday who stood on the street corners for their athletic entertainment.
FRESNO'S POLITICAL BOSSES OUTFOXED: REFORMERS WIN AN HONEST CITY HALL

MAYOR L. O. STEPHENS 1901 - 1904

Fresno has the reputation of being the “livest,” the best business town in California, and the best place to make money. It deserves the reputation. It also has the reputation of being two other things. It is known all over California as the hottest and the wickedest spot in the state. Before the Eastern tourist enters the state he finds every hand held up in horror if he mentions Fresno. He is warned that it is so hot here that we bake eggs in the sun and keep our knives and forks in ice water to keep them from burning our fingers. He is also told wild tales of the criminal record of Fresno and Fresno County. If he retains courage enough to come here at all he is astonished to find a civilized community and a climate that is the finest in the world.

The heat we cannot help. . . . But the moral reputation we could mend if we would. It is not the occasional murder that confirms things that go to make a “wide open town.” When the Eastern visitor sees gambling houses running wide open all night and all day Sunday, without even the pretense of concealment, when he sees that a drunken man can always buy the liquor to get still drunker, when he sees a whole criminal reservation given over to public and concealed prostitution, with a “tenderloin” population equal to that of an Eastern city of ten times our population. . . . it is useless to argue to him that our standard of morals is high.

Excerpt from an editorial written November 28, 1890 by Chester H. Rowell, editor of The Fresno Morning Republican

Fresno’s Long Summer Of Discontent

By Schyler Rehart
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Despite glaring facts to the contrary, many Fresnans for a long time would cling to the notion that all that happened during the summer of 1900 was the result of the damnable hot weather. Since the community’s first years of existence, the heat had been hard on the people of Fresno. Oh, yes, it did make the crops grow, and it brought prosperity. The irrigated lands and the heat made Fresno an incredible Eden in the Sun. But it was also harsh on the men who tilled the soil and labored to make the town prosper.

Was it inevitable that this always must be the way? Was it the price the community had to pay for its bounty?

An increasing number began to think otherwise as the end of the Century neared. Yes, the summer of 1900 had been a particularly hot, dry and exhausting one. Nothing had been made easier by the influx of new settlers. Late every day, especially on weekends, the growing number of saloons, gambling dens and brothels filled with desperate men seeking escape from heat and boredom. Electric fans and new fangled “swamp coolers” provided some coolness. But cheap liquor and expensive games and even more expensive women provided the mind-numbing diversions that made the nights more tolerable for the pleasure seekers.

Farmworkers and businessmen mingled in the smoky pleasure houses in not always peaceful coexistence. The heat made some of them crazy. The long hot days, relieved by cooling evening breezes only after a late sunset, brought more than prosperity. They brought to the booming, but still not entirely tamed, town-city rampant vices and near anarchy.

A growing number of citizens, however, were no longer willing to quietly sit back and accept the so-called inevitability of the old wisdom that a “wide open town” was the key to business success. Such a concept seemed to these “meddling reformers,” as their opponents saw them, to be bad business.

In their view, the new emerging city urgently needed effective city services and, most important of all, strong law and order.

As it was, the only ones who were really benefiting at all, were the vice elements. Fresno in 1900 was still firmly in their grip.

Mayor L. O. Stephens Circa 1904 (FCCHS Archives)

It is no wonder that the editor of the crusading leading morning daily of Fresno wrote in the fall of that year with such a deep sense of moral outrage. Despite a successful charter reform battle the prior year, one that called for the establishment of a strong city government beginning in the fall of 1901, Chester Rowell knew as
well as any intelligent man — boss or reformer — that
the war for an honest and effective government was far
from anywhere near at hand.

Beginning in early June, when farm laborers from
nearby ranches and colonies were joined by miners and
loggers from the foothills and mountains, began pouring
into the town seeking food, drink and entertainment,
both of Fresno's newspapers began to report outbreaks of
crime. Tragically, the police often seemed as much a part
of the problem as anyone.

The saloons, following a tradition that extended back
to Fresno's earliest days, were open seven days a week
and 24 hours a day. The saloonkeepers, also following
time-honored tradition, favored the police. These
pathetic men in uniform, usually appointed by the city
trustees more because of their party loyalty than any law
enforcement training or experience, turned out to be
more dangerous than helpful in the ensuing crisis. Badly
outnumbered and outwitted, and nearly always drunk,
the half dozen or so policemen on duty most evenings,
were frequently reported as leading the disorder rather
than curbing them.

Fresno was a young, growing
city at war with itself

For much of the summer, the Evening Democrat and
the Morning Republican seemed to be in some kind of
contest to out-report the other about the out-of-control
crime occurring throughout the city. It was easily worst
in the tenderloin areas, but since all parts of Fresno had
its share of saloons and drunks, it was most frightening
and devastating in the more respectable districts. Even
the most respectable citizens who had to be out after dark
accompanied. The womenfolk at home usually kept a
loaded weapon by their side when the men were out,
according to the Republican. This was, as Editor Rowell
observed, the price the community had to pay for a
prosperous "wide open town."

But in July, three stabbings in less than a week and
some outrageous conduct by investigating police
triggered Rowell into his most ambitious editorial
campaign yet. The fact that the policemen involved were
appointees of a Republican administration didn't seem to
deter him. He was furious, and in his editorial he
condemned the killings and general police incompetence
as the inevitable consequence of a weak city government
condoned by irresponsible citizens. Together, he wrote in
fury, they all permitted a wide open town to exist just
because "it was good for business." He made it clear that
he was declaring war on this concept because it only
benefited the worst side of business.

Then one early Sunday morning, as if to answer or
confirm Rowell's charge, three of the town's seven
officers on duty got drunker than usual and went on a
rampage. According to news accounts in both daily
newspapers, they assaulted innocent citizens and
threatened to shoot up the town. It is not clear what set
them off, but Rowell made it clear that the city trustees,
Republican or Democrat, were squarely to blame. They
alone had any power over these appointed officers:

Unfortunately, if any inferences are to be drawn from
the past there is no reason to expect that anything will
be done about it. One of the officers concerned... has
already been once before the board on a charge of
drunkenness, and found guilty. The verdict still stands

on the records of the board, but the drunken officer is
still on the force, though his habits have undergone
no reformation. At least one other of these officers has
been drunk on duty to the personal knowledge and
observation of members of the board, but nothing
was done about it... Fully half the entire police
force... have been reported drunk on duty, and
nothing has been done about it.

According to reports in both newspapers, the trustees
finally attempted halfhearted action in the face of con-
siderable public reaction. During the next several
meetings they attempted to work out rules for police
conduct and supervision. Judging from subsequent
reports of more police irresponsibility, however, it was
clear that things did not improve much.

It is hard today to assess just how the readers of the
newspapers during the horrible summer of 1900 reacted
to the outrageously lurid and tragic reports and the
subsequent pathetic attempts by the trustees to do
something. It really was no longer a question of who was
to blame, Democrat or Republican. Fresno was a young,
growing city at war with itself, and it was happening on
both sides of the track.

MAKING IT NONPARTISAN

As Rowell saw it by the end of the summer of 1900, the
trick was to make the whole issue nonpartisan. The year
before, he had attacked District Attorney O. L. Evert,
on not on the grounds that he was a Democrat following any
kind of party doctrine, but on the grounds he was simply
corrupt.

He had all but destroyed Evert's political career in a
series of investigatory articles, supported by solid
evidence based on painstaking investigatory work that
demonstrated that Evert had flagrantly and consistently
violated his public trust by determining whether a
defendant would be prosecuted on the basis of which law
firm his defense attorney was associated with. If it
happened to be Evert's firm, the man would very likely
escape prosecution. None of it had anything to do with
which party he belonged to or whether he was guilty.

Rowell saw the tragedies
of the summer as opportunity.

In the meantime, Rowell went after the Republican
administration at City Hall with almost equal zeal, and
an equal sense of non-partisanship. He blasted Boss Joe
Spinney, the representative of West Fresno, as a loyal
sympathizer of the special interests. He attacked Spinney
as hard as he had Evert, but with even greater effect since
Spinney depended upon the people who read the
Republican far more than did Evert. Most important for
Rowell's credibility, he rose far above partisan politics by
denouncing the existing political system as neither
Democrat nor Republican, but a tailor-made monster
fashioned to serve the interests of the railroad push, not
the people.

The leaders of his own party could hardly openly
quarrel with that assessment.

As the summer gave way, finally, to cool fall, it
was increasingly apparent that Rowell remained hot and
prepared to play a dangerous political game. Now in his
third year as editor, Rowell's aggressive crusading against
the "associated villainies" and the recent success of the
charter reform which he had led, had made him a
popular man among the more reform-minded of the community. While many powerful legitimate businessmen might remain dubious about the eventual success of the reform effort, an increasing number seemed ready to give him a chance.

Most important, the conservative men who made up the Republican's board of directors were impressed by the increasing ad revenues and soaring circulation of what was now Fresno's leading daily newspaper. Rowell's tactics seemed to be working, at least business-wise. At the same time, the leaders of both political parties were forced to admit that the near anarchy of the summer just-ended had proved that the city trustees had learned little, and could not overcome their natural inertia and corrupt condition.

And so Rowell saw the tragedies of the summer as opportunity. He had high hopes that the election scheduled for the next spring would produce a truly independent and honest government, despite the well-heeled push. As his editorial in November indicated, Fresno might be, at last, developing a real community conscience.

**REFORM FORCES GROW**

New churches were being built that attracted increasingly larger and more enthusiastic congregations. The pastors of the nineteen different Protestant churches of Fresno had established a Ministerial Union in the 1890s to give support to reform. While still a long way from accepting any form of ecumenicalism with the Protestant movement, the Catholic Church also increasingly served as a base for reform.

At the same time, the public schools, including the new Fresno High School, employed more than sixty teachers and administrators who formed the nucleus of an intellectual element in the community.

Various men's and women's groups also were growing rapidly in the city. The women's clubs especially provided forums for reformers. Rowell was a popular speaker at the meetings of these groups, and he made the most of the opportunity to encourage more active participation in the local political process.

In its New Year's edition, the Republican enthusiastically welcomed the Twentieth Century with an editorial that, among other things, extolled "the energetic, enterprising, enlightened-and-up-to-date spirit" of Fresno, which had become the "catalytic factor in its growth."

**NEW CHARTER PROVIDES KEY**

The new charter was the mainstay hope. It abolished the offices of tax collector, assessor and treasurer and transferred their duties to corresponding county officers. Only three elective officers — the mayor, city clerk and police judge — would make up the executive branch of the new administration. They would have four year terms.

Two elective boards also were created — the board of trustees and the school board — each with eight members nominated from wards but elected at-large. All other city officers would be appointed by the mayor with the consent of the trustees, except the school superintendent,
outwitted.

The whole idea was to give the mayor's office considerable power and to clarify who was responsible to whom. As Rowell had frequently noted, in the old regime, political power often was a shell game, with power usually in the hands of the one who best accommodated the special interests. That was why Joe Spinney, as representative from the tenderloin, though nominally only one of five trustees, really ruled. Another major problem under the old general law government was the total lack of accountability of police officers to anyone except the trustee in whose ward he worked. Not even the police chief had any direct powers of hiring or firing.

The new eight ward system was overtly designed to replace the shell game made easy by the old five member board. Spinney's old West Fresno Fifth Ward was divided up into three districts, each having representation beyond the confines of the tenderloin area. In this way the reformers hoped to break "boss rule" by depriving anyone from any one ward from having exclusive support from the vice interests.

The push had tried, covertly, to defeat the new charter as it had defeated all earlier attempts at reform. They had failed. Now they were just as determined to manipulate the new government with the help of accommodating party regulars.

At first it seemed that they would do so. The key to the whole issue seemed to rest with who was nominated for mayor from each major party. Local party conventions still decided who would run. All that had to be done, the push reasoned, was to see if it that both the Republicans and the Democrats nominated men acceptable to the push. Since the new city executive — really the first real mayor that the city would have — would have the greatest power, it was crucial that he be the "right man." For the push that meant a man easily controlled. For the reformers, it meant a man of integrity and strong character. Such a man, the reformers believed, might actually clean up the town.

The push went all out to prevent this. It remained confident that money and influence in the regular party organizations would result in victory. No cooperative buffoon or clever knave would do, of course. Spinney was out. Something more like the honest but stupid man would have to be found.

Unfortunately for the men of the push, Rowell understood the system thoroughly by this time. He knew the old order had its weaknesses. Despite its almost unlimited resources of money and manpower, Rowell realized he had some very aroused and angry voters on his side. While the standpat party regulars might cave in to the push, it was possible that they all could be outwitted.

**BOSSES OF BOTH PARTIES TRICKED**

When Rowell learned that the Democratic bosses were talking up old Judge Holland, on whom anything could have been put over, he devised a scheme that would ensure the election of a decent and honest man no matter who won. As he would describe it later in his "Autobiography," he outfoxed the push by getting himself nominated as the Republican party candidate for Mayor.

The argument was that if I took the Republican nomination the Democrats would have to nominate a respectable man, too, and then the city would be safe, whoever was elected.

Fortunately, the Democrats did respond to Rowell's nomination by naming a fairly honest and independent-minded man to challenge him. The Democrats evidently expected to control him the same way that the Republicans hoped to control Rowell. The one thing that none of them expected was Rowell's decision to look for backing of his own party bosses.

I . . . announced that I would make no campaign, spend no money, and ask for no votes. My opponent and I, said, both stood for the same things. If the people wished to elect me, I would do my best to serve them. If they preferred him, I would be glad to support the administration.

The Republican bosses were understandably stunned. Their candidate refused to even meet with the key men with money and influence or with the tenderloin bosses. Sam Hogue, a leading Republican boss who had himself elected Rowell's "campaign manager," tried to talk Rowell into going "across the track."

He wanted me to see the priest, the chief of the anti-Catholics, the labor and anti-labor leaders and heads of all the gangs. He brought the Negro preacher to me and he told me very nobly how his people were honest and did not want money for their votes, and was very disappointed when I pretended to believe him.

It was about this time that Rowell announced that henceforth, he would be "a nonpartisan candidate" who, if elected, promised to run the city on sound business principles, without politics. He announced further that he would not campaign actively and said that, as far as he was concerned, he was all but convinced that if his opponent were elected, that would be just fine with him. He was convinced that Stephens was honest and would do a good job.

Rowell's self-appointed political managers were outraged, of course. They realized they had been tricked and tried to make a deal with Stephens.

To the horror of both the Republican and Democratic bosses, however, Stephens turned out to be just as independent and reform-minded as his supposed adversary.

Stephens was the easy victor. Rowell's baby daughter, Cora, was seriously ill with cholera infantum, a very common and often fatal illness among young children in those days. A few days before the election, Rowell used his daughter's illness as reason to travel with her and his wife to San Francisco to find a cooler climate and better health facilities.

In his "Autobiography" later Rowell wrote only that he had not paid attention to the election and did not even know the results for some days.

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"He told me very nobly how his people were honest and did not want money for their votes, and was very disappointed when I pretended to believe him." --Rowell
My Republican managers then went to Mayor-elect Stephens and told him they had double-crossed me and delivered their Republican votes to him. They asked him, therefore, to let them name the Republican appointees on those boards which the reform charter required to be bipartisan. He refused, and said he would consult me on my return. When I came back, he offered me the privilege they had asked. I told him I did not care whom he appointed, so long as the Republican appointees were actual Republicans and good men.

From San Francisco, Rowell wrote his father in Bloomington, Illinois, about his satisfaction with the election outcome. In his letter, dated May 13, 1901, written primarily to report that “Baby Coco” was recovering satisfactorily, he added that he was neither surprised nor upset by the election results which had the Democrats taking fourteen of nineteen offices, including the office of Mayor.

I think it was a combination of secret knifing by the push and just retribution by the people. The Republicans as a whole deserved to be beaten, and I had to take the consequences of being on a discredited ticket, added to the consequences of treachery on the part of those who have brought about the discredit. I have not worried about it and was . . . a little relieved. My nomination was the means of getting Fresno a much better Mayor than would have been nominated on either ticket if I had refused the nomination . . . . I think I can have more voice in the new Democratic government than I have ever had or could have in a Republican government controlled by the local “push.”

True to his word, Rowell did support the independent reform administration of L. O. Stephens. True to his word, the new Mayor appointed honest men from both parties to key city offices and forever changed the way politics was done in Fresno.

As the editor of the Republican described it later, “Stephens’ administration was an absolute revolution. The government was honest and sober and reasonably intelligent.”

Rowell noted with pride that the saloons were closed four hours out of each 24, and generally confined largely to their “legitimate business” of selling liquor. He also reported the front doors and windows of the infamous “cribs” of ill-repute were closed.

No, the new reform government did not exactly succeed in really breaking the push’s power or eliminating the chief vices that afflicted the city. While the worst and most openly flagrant elements were driven from public view and the wide open gambling houses finally forced to observe some reasonable rules, even the most ardent and idealistic reformers knew that a long and hard fight lay ahead.

This is not to detract from what really had been accomplished with the election of Fresno’s first really effective and reasonably honest government. It proved that reform was possible. As Rowell concluded in his “Autobiography” the new regime was something that could not be undone,

and which has lasted, varyingly but usually decently ever since. There has not been a person in Fresno . . . who would not have been horrified at the return of the conditions whose overthrow, when it was done, was hailed as “going to kill the town.” Of course it actually had the opposite effect, and the growth of New Fresno began with that time . . . .
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Editor’s Note: Schyler Rehart is a professor of journalism at California State University, Fresno, and has been a Fresno resident intermittently since 1940. Following his graduation from CSUF in 1957, Rehart pursued a career as a reporter for a number of California newspapers and the U.S. Army before returning to Fresno in 1962. He completed his MA Degree in history and subsequently began his teaching career at CSUF. Since that time, Prof. Rehart has written several articles about California history and personalities, including articles for Past and Present.

THE EGGERS CONNECTION

By William K. Patterson

The site of the Fresno Air Terminal, east of Fresno, was the location of the home of the late H.C. Eggers, a grape grower who also was responsible for bringing the first telephone lines to Fresno in 1886.

The 800-acre ranch was part of 80,000 acres between the San Joaquin and Kings Rivers purchased from the federal government in 1860 by a group of San Francisco businessmen of German ancestry. Members of the syndicate included such people as A.Y. Easterby, Frederick C. Roeding and Eggers’ father, the late George H. Eggers. An interesting historical sidelight is the fact that the syndicate sold the land for the original townsite of the City of Fresno to the Central Pacific Railroad in 1882.

The Eggers Vineyard ranch was established in 1868. According to a History of Fresno County first published in 1882, 600 acres were planted to vines and 50 acres to fruit trees, leaving 50 acres of alfalfa and 100 acres for cereals and general farm use. The residence grounds were shaded with poplar, locust, eucalyptus and mulberry trees. An artist’s sketch is all that remains to show what the house looked like. A winery was completed on the ranch in 1882 and two years later was producing annually 65,000 gallons of wine. The winery was sold to the California Wine Association in 1897 and was destroyed by fire in 1913.

In 1941, The Bee reported the City of Fresno purchased 500 acres at Clovis and Shields Avenues from the Eggers Vineyard Co. to lease to the War Department for the establishment of a World War II bomber base. The base was expanded to include another adjacent 300 acres later that year and the site was called Hammer Field in honor of Lt. Earl M. Hammer of San Francisco, the first California airman killed in battle in World War I.

Following the end of World War II, the City of Fresno formally took over the operations of the air base, renaming it the Fresno Air Terminal. United Air lines made the first commercial stop there in 1947 and a terminal building was opened in 1949.

Reprinted from the February 17, 1980 issue of William K. Patterson’s Action/Answers column with permission of The Fresno Bee.
ZAPP’S PARK WAS POPULAR FRESNO SPOT
By June English

Very few people in Fresno today who cross the intersection of Blackstone and Olive Avenues realize there was once a famous amusement park there. Nearly 17 acres, bounded by Blackstone on the east, Calaveras on the west, Patterson on the south and Hedges on the north enclosed swimming pools, a scenic railway, boating facilities, picnic grounds, a dance pavilion, fun rides and a zoo. And the star of all this was Leota Zapp, Fresno’s own famed equestrienne.

During the latter 1890’s W. A. Burnside, his daughter, Leota, and his sons came to Fresno from Panoche Valley where they had raised cattle and horses. They bought twenty acres in the area described above. On the north side of Olive were the barns and houses. Running diagonally through their property was Dry Creek that was crossed by a wooden bridge on Blackstone. The family was in the business of buying and selling livestock.

John Zapp had lived in Fresno for many years and was a hard-working man, selling and hauling fill dirt and sand to building contractors and brickmakers. He and Leota Burnside were married in 1900 and John moved to the Burnside Ranch where he kept his stock and drayage wagons. John Zapp made it his business to supply all the sand that was ordered from the banks of Dry Creek on the Burnside property. Even today that area is simply sand with an added surface of topsoil. As the pits were dug out and holes became large and filled with water from the creek, people began to drive out from Fresno on dusty Blackstone road to spend the day and their children could play in the water of the shallow lakes.

A row of small lots bordering Patterson Avenue were sold and the little street bordering the north side of the lots was called “Orizaba”. The remaining seven and a half acres south of Olive and adjoining Dry Creek were fenced in. Still selling sand, John dug another channel for Dry Creek the full length of the property and thereby created a long narrow island from Blackstone to Calaveras Avenue. The Creek flowed on both sides. On each side of the waterways they planted Balm of Gilead trees. In the meantime, the Fresno Traction Company’s Recreation Park was being developed, but that was way out by the Fairgrounds and did not compete with John Zapp’s Park.

Zapp lined the sides of the channels with slabs of hardpan to prevent erosion, and at the end, near Calaveras Street, he built an octagonal dance pavilion where dances were held regularly and high school and private parties kept the pavilion in constant use. An arched bridge crossed to the pavilion. Small boats were rented to quietly cruise the Dry Creek Lagoon.

Everything that could entertain the people was later added as the years went by; rose-covered boardwalks, swimming pools that were heated, a bowling alley, a Ferris wheel and all the attractions of any amusement park.

Lions, monkeys, elk, sacred cows from India and local animals were also part of the Zoo that was cared for by the animal-loving Leota in the barns and cages on the north side of Olive Avenue. The electric street car had come out as far as Belmont Avenue in 1909 and until it was extended to the Park in 1911, the Park visitors had to walk to the entrance. The refreshment stand was a welcome sight on a hot, dusty, summer day. It was a pleasure to sit under the now-giant Balm of Gilead trees.

(Fresno Bee Photo)
and watch the activity reflected in the dark waters of Dry Creek.

About 1909 Mr. Burnside deeded the property to his daughter. As the years went by the Park became more famous and the lives of the local people centered around the happenings at Zapp's Park. Leota had grown up with horses on their Panoche ranch and it was natural that she would appreciate and acquire exceptional animals. She trained beautiful and unusual horses and became the center of attraction at all public affairs as well as at the Park. She always rode side-saddle and she must have made a handsome picture as she sat her horses and put them through the tricks she had taught them.

In 1918, John was bitten by a monkey from the Zoo and soon died. Leota followed him in death about six months later, in May 1919.

Shortly before John's death it was rumored they were having financial troubles and after Leota's death what remained of the property was inherited by her brothers. For about a year the Park was unchanged and then suddenly, it was no more. The buildings were torn down, the pools and the excavated section of Dry Creek were filled and there was no longer a Zapp's Park. Olive Avenue was leveled and paved and Hammond was cut through to front for the new houses that were being built.

FROM GREEN BUSH SPRING FLOWS
THE STORY OF A CITY CALLED FRESNO

By Howard Miller

Howard Miller was a reporter for The Bee, now retired.

If Tony Easterby had never visited Egypt we might all be living in Herndon, we Fresnans anyway.

It was Anthony Y. Easterby's lush field of waving wheat, the "one green spot in the parched and desolate valley" at the end of the summer of 1871, which caught Leland Stanford's eye.

Imperiously he decreed a station nearby in the center of Fresno County rather than at the more scenic site of Sycamore on the south bluff of the San Joaquin River already platted by the railroad.

And so it was that as the work gangs of the Central Pacific pushing the rails south from Stockton reached a flowing spring in May of 1872, just 100 years ago, they put down a stake and called it Fresno Station.

Green Bush Spring

Green Bush Spring to this day is commemorated with a marker on the downtown Mariposa Mall at Congo Alley, a stone's throw from the Southern Pacific tracks.

Entrepreneurs, businessmen, and storekeepers scrambled for lots offered for sale by the railroad and in a
matter of a month or two Fresno became a dusty, brawling infant.

Moses J. Church is generally given credit as the “father of irrigation” in the Central Valley but it was really Easterby who began it. Not much is known of his early life but he had traveled extensively in the Mediterranean countries and had observed the practice of irrigation in the Nile Valley of Egypt.

In 1868 Easterby, a wealthy man then in San Francisco, took a flyer in San Joaquin Valley real estate being offered for sale in vast tracts.

Church had a big herd of sheep in Napa that were doing poorly on sparse pasture and Easterby gave him permission to move the sheep to his new holdings 200 and some miles away. Easterby had never visited his land but decided to go and see if wheat would grow there.

“I took the San Jose train as far as its terminus, Gilroy, where a stage took Visalia passengers over by the Pacheco Pass to Firebaugh’s ferry,” he wrote. A horse and buggy took him to the sheep camp in the center of a “trackless plain.”

There they found alfalareas and sunflowers 10 feet high.” Easterby commissioned Church to sow an experimental crop. “I was not then aware of the scarcity of Fresno rain,” Easterby said.

Wrote historian L. A. Winchell dryly, “the grain did not survive the light rains of the following spring and the raids of wild horses and cattle.”

Now Easterby remembered the irrigation canals of the Valley of the Nile. Also some settlers near Centerville had already diverted some water from the Kings River through a small ditch for their crops.

Money not being the problem to Easterby it was to many of the early promoters, he simply bought a ditch, had it extended to Fancher Creek (which runs near Clovis Avenue) and then ditched on to his land.

Shipping Grain

That crop of winter wheat that caught Governor Stanford’s eye in November of 1871 was shipped to San Francisco in the fall of 1872 over Stanford’s railroad — nearly four million pounds of it. The railroad charged him $7 a ton shipping cost.

Meanwhile, the construction gangs were busy. On May 10, 1872 the San Joaquin was bridged at the Sycamore crossing, the rails were already nearing the Kings River and on May 26 the telegraph office was moved from Sycamore to Otto Froelich’s store at Fresno Station.

By July, 1872 the rails had reached Goshen and Tipton. Stages ran three times a week to and from there to Los Angeles. Two years later the Tehachapi Mountains were breached and the trains ran at last between San Francisco to Los Angeles through Fresno.

Fresno Station began to bustle. An earlier Fresno City at the headwaters of navigation on Fresno Slough (near present-day Tranquillity) began to wither on the vine as the railroad superseded the intermittent steamboats. In 1873 the then US Post Office Department calmly appropriated the name and renamed Fresno Station Fresno City, which it is to this day.

The city’s hustle and bustle and evident growing ability soon led to its establishment as the county seat and the abandonment of Millerton (now under waters of Millerton Lake).

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