

NUGGETS FROM THE PAST

By Norman McLeod

EARLY FORESTHILL

On January 9, 1979 I visited the late Stella Bowman in her home on Main Street. She handed me some newspaper clippings including one dated May 24, 1933. On its first page was a photo of the Rea Hotel with the following paragraph:

"Another landmark of a glamorous era, when placer mining was still in its heyday, passed yesterday when fire destroyed the historic Rea Hotel in Foresthill. The hotel was a large two story twin peak frame building with double porches extending across the entire front of the building. It was a popular spot for going dancing on Saturday nights. As I understand it, it was almost directly across the street from the present Forest House." (Author Unknown).

Another news item read as follows: "Jane Howell was almost 10 years old when the circus came to Foresthill in 1885. She says: "Elephants, giraffes, monkeys and trained dogs and goats jumped from one horse to another as they ran around the ring. There were lady bareback riders and trapeze performers. A steam blowing calliope made weird music you could hear miles away. How they got all that equipment up here I don't know. Maybe the elephants and giraffes walked the 22 miles from Auburn. Everyone could hear the brass band and calliope down in undertown. We kids all had to go to the circus in the evening. The big tent was pitched in the west end of town. Miners from neighboring camps came in, from the Gray Eagle and Excelsior Mines from down Yankee Jim's road. From the Mayflower and Live Oak Mines north of Foresthill, where they had a town and school and big boarding house and lots of Chinese who liked circuses too. From the Dardanelles and Baltimore Mines to the southwest of town, they wandered in. From Sunny South, Michigan Bluff, Damascus, Deadwood and even far off Last Chance, by horseback they came. I must not leave out Todd's Valley between Spring Garden and Foresthill. Natives came from there too. They liked circuses too."

The following article is taken from the Pony Express newspaper dated July 1957. It was titled: "When Medicine Men Came to Foresthill" by Jane Howell Waters as told to H. Hamlin.

"Madame Moustache was not the only one who came to town, attracting the crowd. When medicine men showed up it really was something to listen to," said Mrs. Waters, who spent her early youth in Foresthill. Her father, Frederick Howell, bought the famous Garden Mine from the Deidisheimer brothers in 1858. "Among troupers who came to sell their wares, usually by the bottle, were purveyors [Sic.] of St. Jacobs Oil, Pawnee Indian

Oil, Kickapoo Indian Oil and Hamlin's Wizard Oil, with every bottle guaranteed to be good for man or beast. Many miners believed in the remedial qualities of these oils, it rubbed out their rheumatism and stiff joints, so they got well and went back to work. Lydia Pinkham pills were supposed to be for the ladies, to keep them beautiful just like pictures shown in the magazines. Women used the oils too, believing in their magic powers."

The following is a newspaper article written by Mrs. Waters of Foresthill titled: "Foresthill Remedies".

"I love all the mountains, streams, lakes and forests of Placer County," says Mrs. Waters. "And springtime is the most beautiful part of the year in the Sierra. But oh, how the children hated to see it come. Our mothers were religious in giving us kids remedies for everything. Spectoral was a cough medicine given with a spoon and nasty stuff. No wonder it disappeared from the market, and molasses after we wore all winter those asafetida bags around our necks. The school stove hadn't been carried out yet so fires were still going whether we needed them or not. We kids started sweating and the asafetida bags filled with garlic, I think, started smelling. Turkish rhubarb was another guaranteed medicine. It was a root our mothers rubbed over a nutmeg grater. The powder was mixed with sugar and warm water, then came an ungodly physic. Another dose, not quite so bad, was hamburger tea, mixed with some kind of an herb. What a cleaning out we got! Gee, were we glad when springtime was over," opined the former queen of the Foresthill Admission Day celebration on September 9, 1898.

The following is a popular story of the last century. In Monroe, Michigan, stood a statue of General George Custer honoring the 7th Cavalry leader in his hometown. There he sat peacefully on his faithful horse until a disciple of the magic medicine -- Hamlin's Wizard Oil -- climbed a ladder to inject a full syringe of the serum into the general's bronze buttock. To the amazement of all the general yawned, stretched his arms and descended from the saddle to the ground. The courthouse square grew so silent one could have heard a horse hair hit the pavement. Suddenly a news reporter with pencil in hand rushed up to the general and asked, "Sir, what is the first thing you're going to do?"

Custer smiled at the reporter, pulled out his Colt six-shooter and replied, "I'm going to shoot them damn pigeons." (Thank you Stella).

Let's get back to Foresthill. Mrs. Waters continues: "Olga Louise Wukasinovich, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Wukasinovich of Auburn, and James Robert Cloud Jr., son of Mr. & Mrs. James R. Cloud of McKeon, exchanged wedding vows on Saturday October 13, 1951, in the Foresthill Chapel in Foresthill. This was the first wedding to be held in the new Foresthill Memorial Chapel. Reverend William C. McCalmont of the First Presbyterian Church of Roseville officiated in the presence of 100 guests. Selections of organ music were presented by Mrs. Vivian Stone."

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