

# SUNSET

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CALIFORNIA

SACRAMENTO VALLEY

THIRD PAPER ON  
ACHIEVEMENTS OF

LUTHER BURBANK

# At Fair Oaks on the American.

By Frank J. Bramhall.



GIANT LIVE OAK TREE AT FAIR OAKS, THE LARGEST OAK IN CALIFORNIA

FROM Sacramento, capital of California, the Southern Pacific has a branch railroad running eastward over the level country covered by vineyards, orchards and hop fields, on the south side of the American river, to Folsom, the center of the gold mining operations of a half century ago, and thence through the foothills to Placerville. When, last summer, the branch line was built, a great many people who used to know the high bluffs and rolling country on the north side of the river merely as a part of the old San Juan grant, and a sheep range of Cox and Clark, wondered why this line was built; but whoever goes up there now on one of the double daily trains from Sacramento will find abundant reason in the attractive colony of eastern people who have settled there.

The station is at the south end of the handsome steel bridge, which the county built over the river last summer at a cost of some thirty-two thousand dollars, and the fine, graded road winds up through the bluffs to San

Juan hall, which is about the center of the village. This hall fronts upon a large plaza which is being laid out with shade and ornamental trees, a fountain and flower beds; beyond which is expected to be built this year a new schoolhouse, for which bonds to the amount of fifty-nine hundred dollars have readily sold at a premium of three hundred dollars, which indicates the excellent credit of the colony.

The land recedes in every direction in gentle undulations, giving almost every lot of ground, however small, a good building site with extensive views. It is all elevated. The precipitous bluffs along the river, which is the first high ground encountered east of Sacramento, are about one hundred and fifty feet in height, while the higher points of the land back from the river rise one hundred feet higher. All along the bluffs, and, in fact, all over the colony, excepting where replaced by orchards, the land is richly covered in spring and summer with a profusion of wild flowers, and



ONE OF THE FAIR OAKS

is thickly dotted with great, live-oak trees, which attest, in the strongest way, the depth and fertility of the soil.

Shaded by a grove of these picturesque trees, not far from the bridge, is the modest but comfortable little

Fair Oaks Tavern, and the residence of S. E. Kiefer, for some time the chief engineer of the colony. Farther to the eastward are the fine residences of Andrew T. Hodge and George Straith, formerly of Chicago. From them, and, indeed, along the bluff, the view is one of unusual extent and beauty. Across the gentle, curving stream below stretch the thousands of acres of vineyards and orchards, while to the east and south-east rise the purple masses and the snow-capped summits of the Sierras. It is only about fifteen miles to Sacramento, and the sunlight may often be seen reflected from the gilded dome of the state capitol.

There are good stores in the San Juan hall, and just beyond is the packing-house of the Fair Oaks Fruit Association, which has done good work with the first harvest of the Fair Oaks orchards during the past season. The



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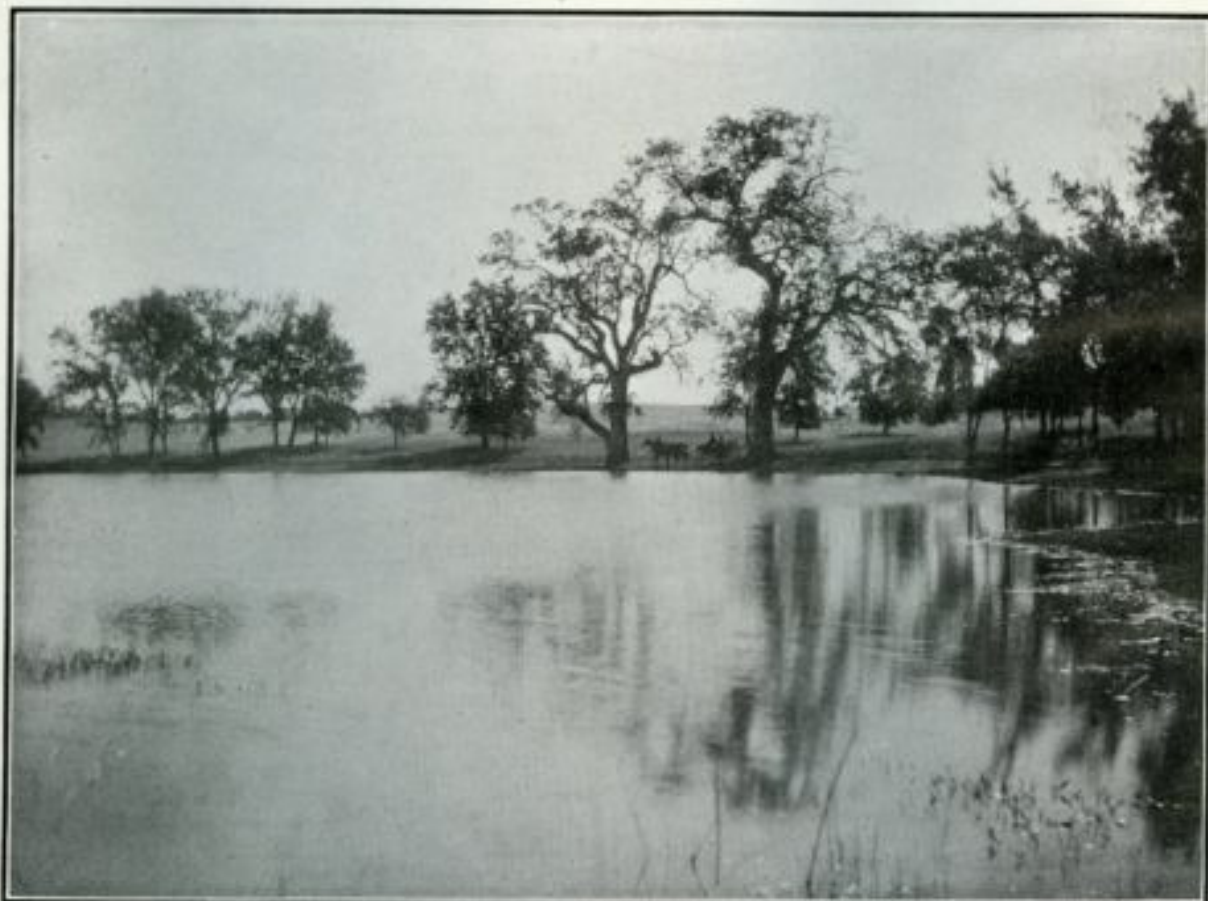


TEMPTATION — STUDY IN THE BECHER WATERMELON PATCH

trees are just coming into bearing, but the Washington navel oranges shipped from there as early as December 10th proved of the finest quality, and the olives were also of unusual excellence, producing a larger quantity and superior quality of oil than the average. The product this first season was some twenty-three hundred gallons of oil

and fourteen hundred gallons of the pickled fruit. Pomelloes, lemons, grapes and deciduous fruits were all excellent, but their acreage is much less than that devoted to oranges and olives.

West of the village, on the bluff, is the residence of Miss Kate Smith, and a little back, on one of the highest elevations, is the fine new residence



ON THE BANKS OF THE POND IN FAIR OAKS PARK





HIDE AND SEEK IN THE BUFFUM GARDEN

of J. C. Buffum, formerly of Pittsburgh, Pa., surrounded by richly cultivated ranches. Nearby are the ranches owned by other Chicago people, S. P. Patterson, editor "Record-Herald"; Mr. Clapp of the "Evening Journal"; Andrew T. and A. J. Hodge; W. I. Midler of the Pullman Company; while on the other side of the village are the beautiful places of O. W. Ruggles, George E. King and Frank J. Bramhall of the Michigan Central Railroad; and of Arthur E. Wilcox, Alexander Craig and Elbert Ingalls of Chicago. C. H. Vehmeyer, a Chicago banker, has a beautiful house

under the spreading oaks of his ranch, the largest under cultivation in the colony, occupied by two of his sons. Dr. Buffum of Chicago has a fine ranch directly across the road from Mr. Bramhall and Mr. Birchard, the last-named being from Springfield, Ill. Next to Mr. Ruggles' place is that of Clay Larimore, a large wheat rancher of Dakota. Farther south is the Four Gables Academy of Professor Elmore Chase, and the places of Rev. Dr. Clark and Rev. Dr. Dickinson of Boston. Dr. Dickinson has been so attracted by the beauties of this locality that he has exchanged his Boston pastorate for one in Sacramento.

These names are mentioned to show the character of the population that has been attracted to Fair Oaks by its beauty, climate and horticultural prospects. They are, as a rule, business men of ability and of enterprise, who have traveled much and are well acquainted with all parts of the country. They have chosen Fair Oaks as their future home because they have believed that it affords the finest field for the greatest enjoyment of life when they are able to shake off the heavy burden of eastern business life.

Altogether, Fair Oaks has now a population of some six hundred, where six years ago there was not a single house. They have, or are rapidly getting, the educational, religious and social advantages to which they have been accustomed in the east, while the transportation facilities are all that can be desired, making the place, in fact, a suburb of Sacramento.

The water supply of Fair Oaks is ample, being drawn from the inexhaustible river some twenty miles above and delivered to the colony by a twenty-eight inch main, which is about to be extended through to its western boundary. They have a very active and efficient grange, which is also practically an improvement association and devotes much time and expense to the improvement of the roads of the colony and the streets and drives of the village. The master of the grange is Mr. George P. Robinson, the resident agent of Raymond & Whitcomb of Boston.



BREAKFAST IN THE JOHN LEONARD ORCHARD

The elevation of Fair Oaks above the lower valley and below the higher foothills of the Sierra Nevada is peculiarly favorable to its climatic conditions. Fogs and frosts sink to the lower level. There are no extremes of heat and cold, and the average rainfall is twenty-four inches. The atmosphere has that element of dryness which deprives heat and cold

of their most unpleasant characteristics. The average of cloudless days at Sacramento for sixteen years was 238 annually; and of fair days, 76 per annum. The record has not been kept at Fair Oaks, but should be superior to that of Sacramento. The Los Angeles record is 167 cloudless, and 150 fair days; San Diego's, 125 cloudless, and 125 fair days. The average winter temperature of the Fair Oaks district is 46°; spring, 58°; summer, 76°, and fall, 60°. In the summer the mercury seldom rises above 90°. A gentle breeze plays through the orchards, and the heat never causes extreme discomfort, nor produces heat prostration. The summer nights are always cool, usually about 60°, and rarely reaching 70°. As a result all temperate and semi-tropical fruits, plants and trees do well, and oranges ripen from four to six weeks earlier than in Southern California. The oranges of this region are also of excellent quality, as well as the lemons and olives.

Altogether, Fair Oaks is a charming and instructive illustration of the marvelous attractions and capabilities of the Sacramento valley, and of what can be accomplished by the united co-operative energy of clear-headed, practical business men.

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