

1987 is rapidly coming to a close. I thank you, the members of the Chula Vista Historical Society, for your response and support.

I'm busy gathering stories and photographs for our 1988 volume of the Bulletin. They are educational, humorous and quite entertaining. They are rich with history and heritage of our area.

Merry Christmas to you and your families, and may the New Year bring you much happiness.

Editor - John Rojas Jr



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Chula Vista

Historical Society

Bulletin



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The Chula Vista Historical Society was founded on May 1, 1981 for the preservation of History and Heritage of the people and places of this area of San Diego County. The bulletin is the official publication of the Chula Vista Historical Society. P.O. Box 1222, Chula Vista, CA. 92012. Telephone 426-1222. BULLETIN founder and editor John Rojas Jr.

Welcome

New Members

Suzanne King Butler
Tom & Marilyn Carnes
John Gross
Myron & Mae Schraud
Victor D. & Margaret M (Burns) Stewart
Carol Thiel
Nancy Lee Wheeland

IN THIS ISSUE

Bonita Museum
Flood of February 1927
Third Avenue Track Becomes History
"It's About Time" - The Otay Watch
Postal History
Bygone Bonita

DATES TO REMEMBER

5 and 6 February - 8:00am - 4:30 pm Fri.
8:00 am - 6:00 pm Sat. San Diego
Electric Railway Assoc. Rummage sale,
Knights of Pythias Lodge, 200 East Plaza
Blvd., National City.

9 February - 7:30 pm Tuesday
San Diego Electric Railway Assoc. will
meet at the San Diego Gas & Electric Co.
Auditorium, 101 Ash St., San Diego.
Eric Sanders will present a slide and
movie on the San Diego and Arizona Railway.

16 February - 2:30 Tuesday
Walkabout with John Rojas. Meet at
Chula Vista Municipal Golf Course
parking lot. Pace is moderate, 3-5 mile
walk.

13 August, 1988 - Noon to 5:00 pm
7th Annual Sweetwater High School Family
Picnic. All classes, their families and
friends welcome. Honored classes: 1938,
1963, 1978. Swiss Park, Chula Vista
(I-5 and Main St.). For Info: Ginger Black
422-2190 or Don Rice - 287-8057.



BONITA MUSEUM

NOW OPEN

Thursday - 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Saturday - 12:00 noon - 4:00 pm

Located at:

BONITA VILLAGE
4108 Bonita Road

Sponsored by the Bonita Business and Professional Association

Curator - Zula Pena

Museum Board Members: Carol Hammond, Richard Pena, John Rojas Jr and Dick Yokely

Currently on Display -- Early Sunnyside Valley, Dairy Industry, Lemon Industry.

Maps, Otay watch and lemon box labels, donated by Mr. & Mrs. Bill Aitken.

Fuson time capsule, photographs of early days.

BYGONE BONITA

by Alf Lansley

It was 1907 when Miss Carrie Haines, daughter of a very prominent orchard family of Chula Vista graduated from the San Diego Normal School on Park Avenue. Miss Haines then had a diploma and credentials to teach school and was looking for a job. She contacted Mr. Wilhelm Hahn, my step-father, who lived at Cockatoo Grove Rancho and was one of the San Miguel District School Trustees. She got the job and she boarded with the Lansley family at Cockatoo for almost a year.

Our one-room school house was located at the intersection of Janal Road and Proctor Valley Road. The three Lansley boys and their teacher rode horseback to school and it was my job to saddle and take care of our teacher's horse.

Those were the good old days, when the "air was clean" and there was much more virgin earth than pavement, when large "coveys of quail" rose with a whirring roar beside the dirt road and quail and toast for breakfast was a delicacy.

The pupils at our one-room school were few and far between. They were the three Esterbloom children, Arvid, Dora, and Clara. They lived with their grandparents at the foot of San Miguel Mountain. Then the three Haubert children, Henry, Willie and Lena, they lived at the head of Otay Lake in the Proctor Valley area. Then the three Etchenique children, Frank, Lucille, and Aurelia. They lived in Telegraph Canyon. Then Lee Brewer, he lived at Raake Lake up close to San Miguel Mountain; then the Lansley, Sid, Alf and Ernie, who lived in Telegraph Canyon, and last but not least, the very nice twin girls, they were about twelve years old and lived on the Hitchcock place.

The year Carrie taught at our one room school, was a wonderful year for the three Lansley boys. Each evening after supper we would all sit around our large kitchen table with a large kerosene lamp on each end and play games of all kinds. Carrie Haines knew a lot of good games. The Lansley boys hated to see the school year end. We had fun!

Her next school was at Seeley, in the Imperial Valley and Mark Skinner, son of the man who owned and operated the first hardware store and plumbing shop in Chula Vista could be seen with his horse and buggy passing the Cockatoo Rancho early in the morning on weekends on his way east to Seeley, to spend weekends with Carrie. At the end of the school year, Carrie Haines became Mrs. Mark Skinner. They settled in Chula Vista and operated the hardware and plumbing shop for many years.

I remember years later, when Carrie Skinner and my wife Eunice were on the election board together, my ears would burn and then I would hear about all of the naughty things I did in those early days at school.

AN INTERESTING ANECDOTE.....

One day at school, the boys' out-house went up in flames. It was thought arvid Esterbloom and Alf Lansley were sneaking out for a smoke and dropped a match down the hole and that they were the culprits.

The Trustees held a meeting at the school to find out who done it.
THE VERDICT: They couldn't keep a straight face and "we kept quiet".

City Supply of Milk, Provisions Cut; Chula Vista Water Off as Main Breaks; Tijuana Isolated, Lacks Lights, Food

SIXTH DAY OF STORM

HUNDREDS BATTLE successfully to save 1870 dike at mouth of Mission valley, protecting marine base from flooding.
THREE CITY RESERVOIRS overflow, while two others, cut off from communication, are believed filled.
PIPELINE BREAK deprives Chula Vista of water.
OCEANSIDE AND TIJUANA without lights and latter cut off by break in bridge.
MILK SUPPLY entirely cut off here with most of provision supply.
LA JOLLA on emergency water line when Lake Hodges conduit breaks.
ALL DAMS in county hold, despite rumors of breaks.
TOTAL of water impounded estimated at 61,000,000,000 gallons, worth \$5,000,000 after deduction of 50 per cent. Would supply city seven years.
RAIL SERVICE probably week away, but special steamer chartered for Sunday.
CENTER OF STORM moves east, but occasional rains to continue today.

SUBURB FOLK DRAW STORAGE FROM FAUCETS

Tijuana, Oceanside, In Darkness As Wires Break

Thursday, February 17, 1927 --

Chula Vista was completely deprived of water yesterday afternoon when a supply line running from the Sweetwater dam broke.

Advance warning was given before it was necessary to shut off the supply and every household is believed to have drawn an adequate supply for several days. It will be possible to resume service for a short while if the supply is exhausted, it was said.

Although National City is served also by Sweetwater dam, its supply line branches off above the break, and service was not interrupted.

La Jolla Line Breaks--

La Jolla was cut off from its regular supply of water when a pipeline running from Lake Hodges broke and spouted water. Emergency water rapidly was run into the city from the University Heights reservoir. These pipes run under the San Diego river to the coast suburb.

Consequently householders at La Jolla suffered no inconvenience. Probably they will be on the emergency line for some time, as it is impossible to locate the break in the swirl of waters covering the line.

Oceanside was well supplied with water, but its electric current was cut off shortly after 10 o'clock yesterday morning. The break was somewhere between Oceanside and the San Diego Consolidated Gas & Electric company's plant.

Tijuana's connection with the outside world was cut when the approach to the Tijuana river bridge was washed away. With it went electric current and the only immediate means of getting foodstuffs into the border town. The water supply was reported normal.

Although the flood waters are about even with the floor of the wooden structure, the fact that the washed away approach permits much of the flow to spread out below over the lowland will probably save it, officials believe, unless the storm continues.

Shortage Reported--

That there is a shortage of coal oil and gasoline as well as other supplies, is the information received here last night.

Many workmen were busy all day yesterday throwing up a dike about the race track and the grandstand to protect it from further encroachment by water.

Two frame houses, the residences of Mexican officers in the Tijuana valley, were washed away by the raging Tijuana river, but not before they had been vacated by their occupants. Several houses in the river bottom at San Ysidro were washed away also, Hannah said.

Except for these towns, no others experienced lack of water, electricity or gas. Telephone service was generally good through the county, although wires to Los Angeles and to several back country points were down.

NATIONAL CITY CITIZENS LAY IN FOOD STUFFS--

A rush for food supplies in National City was made yesterday afternoon when it was learned that the highway to San Diego was almost impassable. Food

stuffs were being concentrated in the event that supplies from San Diego are held up for an unusual length of time.

Mail service to all points south and east of San Diego has been temporarily suspended, pending repair of highways.

National City residents last night were warned to store water in case principal mains were shut off, although it was indicated that this would not be necessary as the water in Sweetwater dam was reported to be receding.

Another Dam--

Another dam around which rumors of a break circulated was that of the Sweetwater Water company, near Chula Vista, late yesterday still stood adamant while water poured through its spillway.

The wide valley below was flooded, as 22,500 cubic feet of water a second poured out of the reservoir. Some homes were abandoned and water stood a foot deep in the Sweetwater Food company's plant at Bonita. It was in this valley that the break in the pipeline occurred which cut off Chula Vista's water supply.

Excerpt taken from The San Diego Independent

THIRD AVENUE TRACK BECOMES HISTORY

Freight trains and automobiles do not belong together - especially when they share space on a busy city street. This fact combined with the closing down of a lemon packing plant and the relocation of a vegetable packing plant brought about abandonment of Chula Vista's famed Third Avenue track.

Steam passenger and freight trains, electric interurban cars, city-type street cars, and modern diesel freight trains have at various times rumbled along Third Avenue. The route itself dates back to 1887 when the first South Bay railroad was built.

The National City and Otay Railway Company, organized by the Land & Town Company on December 27, 1886, began operating trains from San Diego to National City on June 14, 1887. Service was initiated to Chula Vista on June 26, to Otay on October 2, to Oneonta on December 4, and via a branch to Tia Juana (U.S.) on May 20, 1888. Thus many South Bay communities were linked together by the now long gone "steam dummy" trains.

A "steam dummy" is a small locomotive shrouded so that it resembles an ordinary passenger coach or horse car. (One musn't scare the horses, you know!) This type train with a locomotive and trailer or trailers was in reality a steam street car. In time, however, the "dummies" gave way to the more orthodox steam locomotive. Traffic between San Diego and National City in the early years reached a peak of 64 daily trains. Passengers included folk bound for the suburbs, the "wet" town of San Diego (National City was "dry"), the spectacular Sweetwater Gorge and the International Border.

Entry into Chula Vista was from the northeast. From approximately Terrace and 24th Streets in National City the line extended from and down the bluffs, across a bridge built over the Sweetwater River, and up a cut in the south bank of the river to the residential district north and east of downtown Chula Vista. (The roadbed is still visible on both sides of the valley.) The route was then via 2nd to E to 3rd and then a few blocks south on 3rd to the Chula Vista station located in what is now the parkway in the business section.

Prior to July 1, 1906 the John D. and Adolph Spreckels interests had acquired control of the NC&O. Electrification of the San Diego-Chula Vista section was decided upon and the company proceeded with the construction of overhead and the installation of other necessary facilities. Four passenger coaches, purchased from the Coronado Railroad Company, were rebuilt in the NC&O shops at 24th Street and Cleveland into modern electric interurban cars. Additional cars were purchased later from the Niles Car Company and some trailers were acquired second hand. On December 1, 1907 the golden trams took over the passenger runs between San Diego, National City and Chula Vista. In the beginning a shuttle car connected Chula Vista with National City. Only the trains to Tia Juana, the mixed train up the Sweetwater Valley and the freights continued to be steam powered.

The National City & Otay Railway Company was merged on July 1, 1908 with the Coronado Railroad Company to form the San Diego Southern Railway Co. By September 1908 interurban cars ran "through" to Chula Vista. Except for an occasional freight and the Sweetwater Valley train, on February, 1909, all steam trains were routed west of Chula Vista via the Coronado Belt Line to all southern points instead of over the Third Avenue track. A new depot replaced the original Chula Vista depot. In October 1909 electric interurban service was extended out Third Avenue to Otay.

THIRD AVENUE TRACK contd.

The San Diego Southern became the San Diego & South Eastern Railway Co., on March 20, 1912 when the South Bay line was merged with the San Diego & Cuyamaca Railway Co. This latter line ran to La Mesa, El Cajon, Santee, Lakeside and Foster.

The floods came in 1916. On January 22 bridges south of National City were washed out. Most service was discontinued. Additional damage was sustained and all service ceased. On January 31, however, train operation was restored between San Diego and National City but all other service was permanently suspended. One exception was a passenger run from National City over SD&A tracks to the Hercules Powder Plant, the building still in use out by the waterfront.

Damage losses and competition from jitney buses hastened the end of the SD&SE. Upon the order of the State Railroad Commission, the San Diego Electric Railway Co. was authorized to operate its street cars over SD&SE track into National City. Because it also had jitney bus problems the SDERy temporarily discontinued service and the SD&SE interurban cars went back into service. However, in July SDERy again ran cars on the line. Cars used were the famous center-entrance "Exposition Cars" purchased by the company prior to the 1915-16 Exposition. Cars were frequently run in two car trains. Chula Vista service was resumed but a different routing was used. By order of the Commion the San Diego & South Eastern rebuilt the Coronado Belt Line from National City and then constructed new track from the Belt Line up F Street to the Third Avenue track in Chula Vista. SDERy was granted trackage rights and the cars were run through to 3rd and K Sts. The old route from the Terrace District to Northeast Chula Vista was abandoned as was track south of K and the Sweetwater Valley track.

On October 1, 1917 the San Diego & South Eastern Railway Company itself was purchased by the San Diego & Arizona Railway Co. SDERy was again granted trackage rights but the SD&A operated its own freight trains over the "Chula Vista branch." By this time the SD&A had built its main line through Palm City to the border so the SD&SE track south of Chula Vista was abandoned. The SD&A, however, did continue operation on the old Coronado Belt Line.

San Diego Electric's Chula Vista cars carried the route sigh "CV". Cars operated on Fifth Street and Broadway in downtown San Diego.

Last cars operated to Chula Vista at midnight on April 30, 1925. Lack of patronage caused the abandonment. Third Avenue track remained as SD&A's Chula Vista freight line and has remained so to this day. In 1919 the SD&A built a new station - the one which was removed to Harborside in 1958. On January 9, 1930 the last South Bay electric line closed down when SDERy abandoned service to National City.

SD&A became the San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway Company in 1933 when Southern Pacific acquired Spreckels' half interest, thus obtaining complete ownership. Down on the mainline (east side of US 101) the company continued to offer daily passenger and freight service. The Roustabout also continued to run twice a week on the Coronado Belt Line (west side of US 101). In 1951 mainline passenger service was discontinued and diesel power displaced steam power. In 1960 the freight trains continue to roll and they are longer than ever. Chula Vista branch line service will continue. Only the Third Avenue track is being abandoned.

This brochure was prepared for the "pulling of the spike" ceremony marking the close of service on the Third Avenue track in Chula Vista, Calif. of the San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railway Co. Ceremony was sponsored by the Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce on Third Avenue, Friday, December 16, 1960.

"IT'S ABOUT TIME"

By Paul M. Chamberlain

Somewhat over twenty years ago there came into my possession a full plate American watch marked "Otay Watch Co. P.H. Wheeler No. 30500 Otay, California." Since then I have acquired others designated "Golden Gate," "Overland Mail," "Native Son," "F.A. Kimball," "California," "R.D. Perry" and one with no special designation. They are all of the same design and with eleven to fifteen jewels. Some are gilded and some are demaskeened, one is marked "Adjusted" and several have the top plate jewels in gold settings. They all have the winding at the figure 3. The whiplash regulator used is a form patented by P.H. Wheeler when he was with the Columbus Watch Company and it was used by them on some models. The movements have the appearance of products of excellent factory procedure.

What was the history of this venture of making watches in the most southwest corner of the United States? From time to time I have gathered scraps of truth and tradition but it was not until a visit to California that I was able to gather together what seemed to me the necessary authentic data to present a story of belated credit to the originators of the project.

In August, 1914, Mr. Charles A. Manahan, secretary of the American National Jewelers Association, asked me to make a loan exhibit of antique watches at their Convention about to be held in Chicago, where we were both living at that time. Years after, remembering my interest in such matters, he sent me from the vicinity of Los Angeles, where he had settled, a photograph he had made of the Otay watch factory building about eight miles south of San Diego. He wrote, "I wish I could have known the man who promoted the factory; he must have been a wonder. At any rate, the promoter, whoever he was, stands at the head of all California realtors who have followed."

Years ago I heard that the factory had run only a short time and that the machinery had been shipped to Osaka, Japan.

The building shown in Mr. Manahan's photograph had most of its windows intact and some window shades. These may have been replacements, as it was for some years used as a dance hall.

In 1934 I wrote to my sister who was spending the winter in San Diego to secure for me, if possible, any facts relative to the enterprise. Wintering also at the Barcelona Hotel was Mr. Charles Griffin, of Waban, Massachusetts. His father having been a manufacturer of watch tools at Springfield, Massachusetts, the quest interested him. He secured from Mr. Armand Jessop some pertinent data and the advice to get in touch with Mr. J.W. Armbruster, who, as a traveling salesman for watches, knew the inside history of every watch factory in the United States. He also secured for me a photograph of the building as it appeared in 1934, which is reproduced here. From this same source came the information that the name Otay (pronounced Otie), is of Indian origin and not of Spanish or Mexican as is generally assumed.

OTAY WATCH FACTORY.



IT'S ABOUT TIME contd.

Mr. Armbruster disavowed the reputation Mr. Jessop had given him but he did give me the valuable clue that the Otay machinery was transferred to the vicinity of San Jose, where a factory was built at Alviso. He also knew Mr. Gassler in Springfield, Illinois, who had gone from there to Otay and afterward to Osaka, Japan; from there he returned to the Illinois Watch Company plant, working there till his death about 1919. Mr. Armbruster also gave me the name of Mr. Samuel M. Haig who had some Otay movements for sale and who sent me also a clipping from the San Jose MERCURY HERALD of July 10, 1932, giving an account by J.R. Brokenshire of the Alviso experiment.

The June, 1934, issue of HOROLOGY quoted an article from the San Diego TRIBUNE heralding the fact that Henry Ford had bought an Otay watch, and mentioning Mr. Dale Smith, the City Clerk of National City and a former employee of the Otay factory. Mr. Smith wrote me his memories of the enterprise and put me in touch with Sam Dale of National City. Mr. Dale, it developed, was the son of the man familiar to all watchmakers as the one who made precision chucks and who founded the Dale clock business which was taken over by two of his associates, the Hardinge brothers. Mr. Dale moved to California for reasons of health.

He put me in communication with Mr. Charles F. Perry, son of the first president of the company, who also had worked in the factory.

At Otay I met Lem Clark, who remembered many of the men who had worked in the factory when he was a schoolboy. Many years before, he had gathered information for the late H.M. Higginbotham, who prepared a history of the Otay Company but never published it. Mr. Clark told me that the daughter of P.H. Wheeler, Mrs. Vera Jane Wheeler Pease, of Berkeley, had recently visited the remains of Otay and would be the person of all others to interview in regard to the history of her father. He also told me of the son of Krieger, living in La Jolla. In National City I saw both Mr. Sam Dale and Mr. Dale Smith and cleared up some points not fully settled in correspondence. In San Diego I saw Mr. Armand Jessop and Mr. Charles F. Perry. In La Jolla I found Mr. Krieger who gave me the addresses of his father and of his uncle, both of whom had worked in the factory.

In San Jose I found Mr. George Penniman who had been the San Francisco agent for the Otay Company and who was instrumental in establishing the factory in Alviso.

At Berkeley I met Mrs. Vera Jane Wheeler Pease. Mrs. Pease is a handsome, capable woman, worthy daughter of a remarkable father. She has had a noteworthy career, on the stage, as companion to her father in Japan, as a Red Cross worker overseas during the World War, and as a politician in Colorado, where she was the nominee of her party for Congress, for Governor and for Vice-president. She has supplied me with much data -- family and business letters relating to her father, the photograph of her father, the factory at Otay and of the factory at Osaka and much more than can be compressed in this article. To her generosity and co-operation I am indebted for many items which otherwise would have been unavailable.

To explain this inordinately long introduction, I can only plead the necessity of indicating the sources of my information, and say that my aim is to gather from it all the most probable truth where information differs due to the frailty of memories of events nearly a half century past.

About 1860 (writes John Davidson of Junipero Serra Museum), Warren C., Frank, and Charles Kimball, sons of George Little Kimball, went to California from the vicinity of Concord, New Hampshire; they returned home, but in 1868 went west again, this time to San Diego, which in 1867 could boast of only a dozen inhabitants. Warren and Frank bought 27,000 acres of land south of San Diego, on the bay. This was part of what had been known as Rancho del Rey -- King's Ranch -- but which, with the

IT'S ABOUT TIME contd.

growth of democratic ideas, came to be known as Rancho Nacional. Hence the city which the Kimballs began building on their property was called National City. The father, George L. Kimball, was the first postmaster of National City. Frank Kimball's success in getting the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad to National City confirmed the dream of great opportunities.

It is not very clear who was the prime mover in the project of making a watch factory the nucleus of a booming city at Otay, five miles south of National City. Using a watch manufacturing plant for such a purpose was not a new idea, nor a very successful one, as had been demonstrated by failures at Marion, Ann Arbor, Rock Island, Freeport, Peoria, Wichita, Grand Crossing, San Francisco, Appleton, Fredonia, Atlanta and Aurora.

A full page newspaper advertisement of August, 1888, shows a cut of the factory from the architect's drawing, a three story brick building 100 x 38 feet, mentions capacity of 250 watches a day, power to work 600 men, model watches completed and gives the names of M.D. Hamilton, county clerk; J.H. Guion, general manager; R.D. Perry, president and P.H. Wheeler, general superintendent. Mr. Armand Jessop states that the project was started by F.A. Kimball, Mr. Dale Smith remembers that among the stock holders were M.D. Hamilton, Frank A. Kimball, Eugene Shaffer, Bryant Howard, a Mr. Long, who built the factory, and R.D. Perry.

A letter by "E.H. Miller, Director of Otay Watch Company" dated November 17, 1890, has in its heading "Capital Stock \$125,000. R.D. Perry president; Frank Kimball, general manager; the Bank of National City, treasurer; H.P. Woodward, director and vice-president' P.H. Wheeler, general superintendent."

The contract between the Otay Watch Company and P.H. Wheeler as superintendent was signed February 25, 1889 by R.D. Perry, president, and Jas. H. Guion, general manager. The salary was \$3000 a year and Wheeler agreed to buy 50 shares of capital stock to be paid for by monthly deductions of \$125 from his salary. A letter to his wife and daughter, still in the east, dated March 25, 1889 says, "Factory will be completed April 15. Everything moving O.K."

A letter which may have been used as a testimonial to place Mr. Wheeler in charge of the Otay plant, written by M.H. Hanks, secretary of the Chicago Open Board of Trade, speaks highly of him as an expert in the watch manufacturing business, having been for years with watch companies at Marion, New Jersey; Springfield, Illinois, and Columbus, Ohio.

Philip Henry Wheeler was born at Sharon, Vermont, June 12, 1849; he attended school at Rutland, and enlisted February 28, 1865 at Syracuse, New York, in Company C, 169th Infantry. He received his discharge July 19, 1865, at Raleigh, North Carolina.

Mr. Wheeler married Miss Mary Ella Beach at Bridgeport, Connecticut, September 6, 1871 and their "At Home" cards read "Jersey City Heights." It is not an unreasonable assumption that he was already with the United States Watch Company at Marion, now a part of Jersey City, at this time and perhaps began his first work on watches there. There is a deputy's commission from the Marion Lodge I.O. G.T. No.123, located in Jersey City, dated June 19, 1869, only two years after his army discharge.

In WATCH FACTORIES OF AMERICA, by George K. Hazlitt, the Rockford Watch Company is said to have been organized in 1874, and its factory completed in 1876; Mr. Hazlitt says further that most of the employees came from the Cornell Watch Company's factory, that George D. Clarke was superintendent and P.H. Wheeler assistant superintendent

IT'S ABOUT TIME contd.

Mr. Wheeler's first child was born in Rockford in 1874, so it would appear that he had been on the ground from the date of organization. George D. Clarke had certainly been with the Cornell Company and it is not unlikely that he came from the Newark Watch Company's plant which was bought by the Cornell Company. Mr. Wheeler, we know, had been with the United States Watch Company at Marion, New Jersey, which closed its doors in 1874.

We do not know how long Mr. Wheeler remained in Rockford, but on June 22, 1880, he took out Patent No. 229215 on a micrometer regulator, giving his address as Springfield and on March 1, 1881 a Patent No. 238464 on stem winding watches. Apparently he was employed by the Illinois Watch Company. There exists a letter dated June 19, 1881, acknowledging his resignation from the Illinois Watch Company signed by Charles Sivorowski, secretary and treasurer, which expresses regret and says that any time he desires to return, a position will be open to him.

Mr. Wheeler became superintendent of the Columbus Watch Company on September 23, 1884. On January 1, 1885, a three year contract for \$3000 a year was signed with D. Gruen, president and N.J. Savage, secretary and treasurer. (Mr. Wheeler had previously been a division superintendent.) On August 28, 1886 he and Henry Barbier were granted Patent No. 361658 on stem winding and setting. This was assigned to the Columbus Watch Company and seems to correspond to his 1881 patent. On June 3, 1886 he was granted Patent No. 354283 on a watch regulator. This he assigned to the Columbus Watch Company. It seems to correspond with his patent of 1880.

On January 22, 1889 he was with a factory making hardened steel springs at Oak Park, Illinois and it was from there that he moved to Otay. The advertisement in August of 1888 naming Wheeler as superintendent was probably based on verbal agreements, as Wheeler appears still to have been in Oak Park.

Mr. Dale Smith, as a young man learning the trade of locksmith, in Columbus, Ohio, knew Mr. Wheeler, who told him he was going to start a factory in California and offered to take him there. Some time later the health of Mr. Smith's father required a warm climate and they moved to San Diego. To his surprise he found the Otay factory in progress and, applying to Mr. Wheeler, got a job. His memory of the men who went with Mr. Wheeler includes: N.A. Wheeler (pattern maker); Burkhart (drilling) Flick (draftsman from Columbus); Fred Clark (from Columbus); Rushton (finishing); Johnson (from Columbus, polishing); George F. Kreiger (from Elgin's Machine Shop).

Mr. Wheeler is described as a man of military bearing, about six feet tall, weighing two hundred pounds. He had grey eyes, brown hair, and large, capable hands with a delicate touch. He was very fond of watches and racing horses. He was interested in and helpful to his workmen in their domestic problems, and never had any labor troubles.

Mr. John B. Kreiger writes me from Columbus, Ohio, that he worked in the Otay factory machine shop, with his brother from Elgin, as did Emil Meyer and George Prysikie from Columbus. He states that part of the machinery came from the East and part of it was made in the shop at Otay.

In connection with the origin of the Otay machinery, a die sinker (whose name I cannot recall), employed by the Miehle Printing Press Company in Chicago, showed me in 1898 a watch train wheel which, for presswork, had exquisitely formed teeth. He had made the dies while working for the Cornell Watch Company at Grand Crossing. He told me that the machinery of this plant had gone to California and later to Japan and that he had had an offer to go to Japan.

Hazlitt in WATCH FACTORIES OF AMERICA states that the Cornell machinery was sold to the Independent Watch Company of Fredonia, New York, and was moved from there to Peoria in 1885.

IT'S ABOUT TIME contd.

If the Otay serial numbers between the lowest and highest were all made, the production would have been something over 29,000 a most creditable performance in the period between the signing of the contract with Wheeler, February 25, 1889, and the sheriff's closure, October 13, 1890. Personally I have seen or known of about twenty examples numbered only between 1208 and 1340 and between 30110 and 30637.

Mr. George Penniman, with the supply house of Titcomb in San Francisco, had handled Otay watches. After the closure at Otay he got an option on the machinery, took Frank Kimball and P.H. Wheeler to San Jose, and interested John Roberts; Paul Austin, the Mayor; Frank Devendorf, who later founded Carmel; Jim Rea, the political boss; A.C. Darby, a real estate broker, and others, in forming the San Jose Watch Company. The company was incorporated for \$250,000. Penniman was secretary and had a contract to sell the entire output; he figured that with an output of fifty watches a day he could amass \$100,000 inside of five years in commissions.

A building was put up at Alviso at the south end of San Francisco Bay on the marsh lands known as the "New Chicago" tract. The building contractor took his pay in the watch company's stock.

In the spring of 1891 the watch machinery at Otay was loaded on a bot in San Diego harbor and shipped to the factory at Alviso, not far from San Jose. Penniman started on a tour to sell the watches which he was sure would be turned out. He was in a railway accident which laid him up for a few weeks, and when he got home, he found the bubble had burst. Kimball, the biggest creditor, had demanded his money and, as it was not forthcoming, foreclosed on the plant.

There is nothing to indicate that any watches were made at Alviso. Some of the Otay parts may have been assembled there, but none of the movements bear the name of the new company.

In a document stating the shares held by Wheeler, the letterhead gives the date of incorporation as May 8, 1891 and the officials as Paul P. Austin, vice-president, and George A. Penniman, secretary. Mr. Penniman recalls that the machinery was bought by a Japanese syndicate and shipped to Osaka, Japan, and that Wheeler was hired by them as superintendent.

This closes the second chapter; and for what knowledge we have of the third chapter, we are indebted to a letter from William E. Curtis, special correspondent, to the Chicago RECORD, dated July 19. The year is not given nor does the clipping disclose it. Thanks to Mrs. Pease, we are able to show the cut of the factory at Osaka.

The name of the company was Osaka Tokei Seizo Kabushiki Kuraisha. It was started January 1, and the first watch was turned out April 10. Mr. Curtis says that the enterprise originated with A.H. Butler, of San Diego, who had with him J.H. Hanbury, of San Francisco, and an Englishman named Whitehall. In some manner Butler became possessed of a lot of watchmaking machinery, part of which came from the old Cornell factory at Grand Crossing. (Hazlitt in WATCH FACTORIES OF AMERICA gives 1877 as the closing of the Cornell-San Francisco-Berkeley enterprise, and says the machinery was bought by the Independent Watch Company of Fredonia, New York, which was out of business in 1883, and that the machinery moved to Peoria in 1885. The machinery at Peoria may have been taken to Otay.)

Curtis refers to P.H. Wheeler, the superintendent, as an all-around American who seems to have made a business of organizing and instructing watch factory hands. He states that he brought with him nine experts who, like himself, had contracts for three years and an option of renewal for three years longer at the end of the first term. He names the experts: F.M. Clark and William Keene, from Elgin; T. Schnarke,

IT'S ABOUT TIME contd.

from Rockford; L. Sylvester, E.V. Goodman and Charles Gassler, from Springfield; H. Barbier, S.B. Finch and George Flick, from Columbus. Of the capital stock of \$300,000, 47% went to Butler and his associates for machinery, experience and promoting; the remainder in eight parts to those who had put in \$20,000 cash each. The wages, in equivalent American money, were from five cents to twenty cents a day. The first watches produced were bought by American tourists. The only example I have ever seen had on both the dial and on the movements, "Osaka Watch Co., Osaka, Japan," and a cipher which perhaps was composed of the letter "O" enclosing two "C"s and a "T." The parts were the same as in the Otay watch but the finish was very poor.

A letterhead reads: "Osaka Watch Company, manufacturers of watches, cases and clocks. K. Nada, president; M. Habu, managing director; P.H. Wheeler, general superintendent."

Mr. Wheeler's wife and daughter joined him at Kobe, and it appears that he did not remain at Osaka for the period of his contract but visited there frequently in an advisory capacity. A Kobe letterhead reads: "P.H. Wheeler & Co., watchmakers, jewelers and opticians"; and he imported watch materials and diamonds, and did electroplating, silver, copper and bronze.

On his return from Japan he lived in San Diego. He spent some time in Manila, where he organized a firm to rent, sell and repair bicycles. His wife died October 16, 1906 at Seattle, where they had come from Manila. He was married twice afterward and his third wife survives him. In 1907 he belonged to the firm of Gamwell and Wheeler, in Seattle, dealing in lumber, machine tools, and metals, and filling contracts for municipalities and the Army and Navy.

He moved to Inglewood, a suburb of Los Angeles, where he had a lemon grove and it was there he died April 17, 1917 from a stroke of paralysis. He was buried in the cemetery of the Soldiers Home in Sawtelle, California.

Perhaps never in all the history of American watchmaking has there been a more heroic attempt to produce a good watch under such overwhelming handicaps than that by Philip Henry Wheeler and his associates.

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Editor's note:

"It's About Time" was submitted by Bill Aitken of Colorado Springs, CO. This is about the most complete story of the Otay watch. Mr. Aitken has donated an Otay watch to the Chula Vista Historical Society. This watch was given to Aitken by Sam Dale in about 1920. The watch, with the company's business card and key to the front door of the factory (donated by Lawrence and Ray Downs) are on exhibit at the Bonita Museum.--

Our Otay watch has the serial number 1340. Jon Hanson of Beverly Hills, antiquarian Horologist, specializing in early American pocket watches, states that our watch may have been one of the earliest made since it did not have a model name.--

POSTAL HISTORY

Did You Know...

The Postal Service once transported an entire bank through the mails by Parcel Post.

In 1916, In order to save transportation costs, a merchant named W.H. Coltharp sent a bank in small packages through the mails by Parcel Post from Salt Lake City to Vernal, UT.

Although the transportation of the 80,000 bricks over the 427-mile route (there was no road at the time from Salt Lake City to Vernal) caused some problems for postal authorities, not a single brick was lost.

When Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson learned of this incident, however, postal regulations were rewritten to prohibit such large mailings. His letter announcing these revisions ended by saying that "It is not the intent of the United States Post Office Department that buildings be shipped through the mail."

Because mail service is taken for granted by most people, few realize what a huge undertaking it is to sort, transport and deliver mail to every address in the United States. But consider that in fiscal 1986 the Postal Service:

Issued 30.4 billion stamps, enough to circle the globe 19 times.

Delivered 147,5 billion pieces of mail, an average of 614 pieces per person.

Used 90 million gallons of fuel to operate 137,446 vehicles.

Handled 42 million changes of address.

Adding a motorized delivery route costs the USPS a minimum of of \$33,000 a year.

Carrier delivery service comprises 39 percent of all postal workhours.

The annual per delivery cost of service is:

To door receptacles - \$118.

To curblin receptacles - \$83.

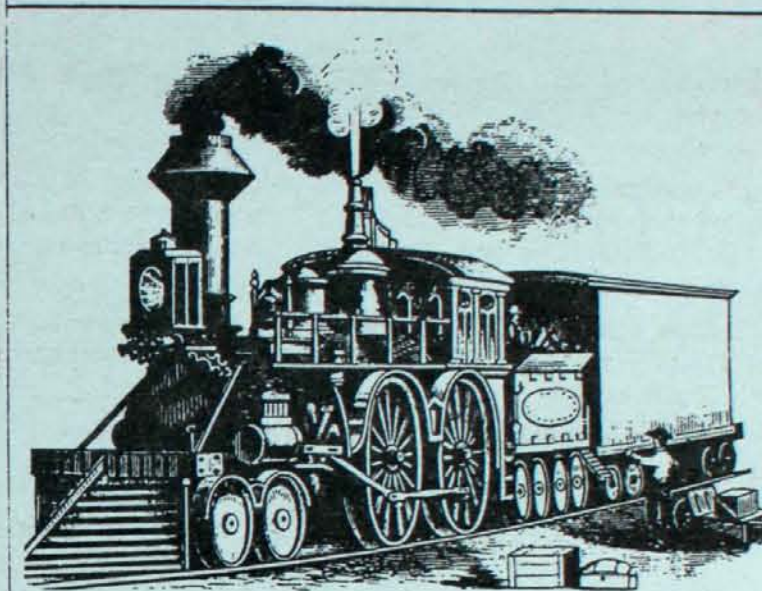
To centralized receptacles - \$71.

Each year 1.5 million new delivery addresses are added.

Centralized delivery in high-rise buildings can reduce costs by 60 percent.

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