

## History of Byron, California

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### BYRON

IN the extreme eastern section of Contra Costa County, surrounded by fertile and productive farms and orchards, is the thriving and attractive town of Byron. It had its beginning in the fall of 1878, when the Southern Pacific Company began to run its trains through this section. Byron is located about five miles northwest of Brentwood and a like distance from the county line, and is situated in the midst of one of the best agricultural districts in Contra Costa County. Two and a half miles from the town is located the famous Byron Hot Springs.

The first house erected in Byron was used as a hotel by F. Wilkening in 1878. Fish & Blum erected a large warehouse about this time.

Eden Plains and Point of Timber derived their names - the first from the wonderful fertility of its soil, the other from the peculiar form in which the belt of timber grew that then covered that section. It was V shaped, the point coming to the vicinity of the site of the store kept by James A. Salts at that place. The Point of Timber landing was burned in the winter of 1881-82 by two fires. Although it was the property of the neighboring farmers, it never proved of any great utility or monetary advantage to them.

Point of Timber had an A. O. U. W. lodge, instituted on April 12, 1870. Excelsior Lodge No. 349, I. O. G. T., was organized on March 7, 1869. Point of Timber Grange No. 14, Patrons of Husbandry, was organized May 21, 1873, and was the outgrowth of the Point of Timber Farmers' Protective Club.

After the advent of the railroad through this section Byron commenced to expand and several houses and stores were erected. The town now numbers about five hundred residents.

While grain was the main harvest for many years, latterly it was

found that the soil was adapted for other products. Almonds and walnuts have shown surprising crops, and hundreds of acres have been put out to alfalfa. Almost every product of the soil thrives. There are a number of dairies in the community that are operated under the most sanitary conditions, much milk and cream being shipped.

For years the farmers depended upon the natural rainfall for their crops, but during 1915-16 the Byron-Bethany irrigation project was got under way. This great enterprise will furnish water for fourteen thousand acres of choice land, at an approximate cost of ten dollars an acre. The company was organized with a capital stock of one hundred thousand dollars. It commenced to run water through its ditches in May, 1917, from the Brentwood line to the Western Pacific tracks west of Tracy.

There are four thriving fraternal societies in Byron - the Native Sons, the Odd Fellows, the Woodmen of the World, and the Native Daughters.

There are four churches - the Methodist Episcopal, the Congregational, the Seventh Day Adventist, and the Catholic. The latter is to be dedicated in June, 1917, and cost five thousand dollars. Bishop Hanna will have charge of the dedication, assisted by Father E. S. McNamara, the first priest in charge. The church is of concrete and will seat two hundred and fifty people.

The Byron school is a modern building, costing about four thousand dollars. The first teacher was Miss Ella McCabe. Miss W. H. Diffin is the present principal, assisted by Miss Anna L. Polak.

Permanent concrete and rock roads radiate from Byron in all directions. The town is on the route of transcontinental motor travel via the Borden Delta Highway from Stockton and the Mount Diablo Boulevard.

The history of Byron would not be complete without a mention of Mrs. William R. Wilder, who on October 10, 1916, had been a resident of this section half a century. Her husband came to what is now Byron in 1865, and after erecting a small house, brought his family here from Sacramento. Mrs. Wilder is a daughter of the late Captain George Donner of the famous Donner party, most of whom perished crossing the Sierra Nevada range in the early days.

In order to get the station on the railroad in the proper spot, the people were forced to purchase and donate the land for its present site to the Southern Pacific Company.

Herewith we give the names of some of the early settlers in the

Byron section: 1860-61 - A. Plumley, H. C. Gallagher, and T. Hoffman; 1865-67 - J. E. Carey, J. F. Carey, A. Richardson, W. R. Wilder, D. Perkins, J. S. Netherton, D. K. Berry, M. Berlinger, C. J. Preston, Thomas McCabe, J. P. McCabe, H. C. McCabe; 1868-69 - George Cople, A. T. Taylor, J. Christensen, R. N. McEntire, and W. J. Cotes.

There are many beautiful homes in Byron. Harry Hammond, editor of the Byron Times, has a modern bungalow of eight rooms and about two acres of land. Electricity is installed throughout the dwelling for heating and cooking, and an automatic electric pumping plant is a feature of the yard. He has about one hundred varieties of trees and shrubs. His one acre orchard demonstration farm is intended to show visitors to this section what can be accomplished here. He has fifty seven varieties of fruit trees, and seventeen varieties of vegetables are grown.

The Byron Times, was started in 1906 by Harry Hammond, the present owner and editor. Mr. Hammond has built up his paper to one of influence and power. He is well known to newspaper men throughout the State. The Byron Times is the first paper in the State to use red ink, and the initials in red are a feature of each issue. These initials read a word or words. The paper covers twenty one points in the three counties of Contra Costa, San Joaquin, and Alameda.

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