

The Knave

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progress began to take its toll — progress spurred on by the arrival of the electric streetcar and thrust violently ahead by the exodus of residents fleeing San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and fire.

"In 1903 or 1904 Herman F. Sack started the now famous Piedmont Grocery Company near Glen Avenue. It thrives in the same location today. One block up the street at 41st was Billy Land's Piedmont Market, moved down from its original location near the cemetery. Eventually this fine meat purveyor settled alongside Sack's grocery where it grew and prospered under the management of Rene Guerra, and later his brother, Leo.

"It was Leo who had an endless supply of small coins for all the kids in the neighborhood."

RUSS Larsen, who recently retired after 57 years with the Piedmont Grocery, told Ted that the store had its own stable in back of the store when he went to work there. "They kept eight to 10 horses to power the delivery wagons. Some needed two horses on the Piedmont hills. There were two or three little buggies dispatched early each morning to pick up orders."

"We forget how it was before telephones became common," Ted muses. "Two or three men went out in the buggies and called at the homes of customers to get the grocery orders. They usually tried to get back with all the orders by noon so that they could be 'put up' and delivered in the afternoon. Sometimes the buggy salesman would rendezvous with a 'runner' who took what orders there were back to the store while the salesman continued his calls."

The Oakland Crematory originally planned its plant for Piedmont and Linda Avenues, on the corner where the Piedmont Cinema now operates successfully. "Pat Keller



Photo from collection of Ted Wurm

Piedmont Avenue had its name changed from Cemetery Avenue to Webster and then Piedmont before this photograph was snapped in 1910 at its junction with trolley-happy Broadway

was one of the leaders in blocking the crematory plans, successfully urging that the plant be built instead at Howe and Pleasant Valley.

"St. Leo's church and parish had its start when the Rev. Father Owen Lacey was sent to Piedmont Avenue by Archbishop Patrick Riordan of San Francisco late in 1910. Father Lacey rented rooms in

a small apartment over what is today the Kerry House, and, he said Mass for Catholics of the area in the storeroom underneath.

"The Guerra family had moved to a house on Glenn Avenue late in 1909 and Leo Guerra well remembers the arrival of Father Lacey in the neighborhood. Leo and his brothers, Rene and Vince, were the priest's first altar boys.

"In a short time Father Lacey purchased property at Piedmont and Ridgeway where the present church was built."



ONE OUTSTANDING landmark on Piedmont Avenue in those early days was the grand three-story wooden Piedmont Avenue School at the corner of Echo Avenue. High above the structure and in front was a pointed tower. All was destroyed in a spectacular fire in July 1938.

Next to the school was the George W. Hume estate with high fence and gates along Piedmont Avenue. Beyond this was Piedmont Junction, where Pleasant Valley now crosses the avenue. It was at the junction that visitors bound for

the cemetery would transfer from the electric cars to a one-horse dinky for the last two blocks of their journey.

"Bud Voight's old bar stood on the northwest corner of Piedmont Junction, and Cronin's Bar was on the southwest corner. Next to Cronin's, coming down the avenue, was the Oakland Marble & Granite Works (tombstone specialists), and next to that was 'old man Smith's' small grocery.

"A private policeman named Cecil Hitchcock who lived on Glen Avenue patrolled the entire neighborhood on horseback. Some old-timers hint that the patrolman frequently created false disturbances at night to get overtime pay, but no one complained. After all, his base pay wasn't much to brag about."

There'll be more of Ted Wurm's wonderful reminiscences of early-day Piedmont Avenue next Sunday, along with more pictures: recollections of a homemade telephone system, and the bell that tolled at the cemetery gates when a funeral procession approached.

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