

THE NEW LODI HISTORIAN



Lodi Historical Society member Lynn Benbrook stands at the Lodi Armory Building, where his father, State Guardsman John Mann Benbrook, stood in 1945. In 1942 when John heard that the California National Guard was being “called up,” he took the train from Acampo to Lodi and joined the new California State Guard.

Lodi During World War II, Part Two

by Alane K. Dashner

Hard Times in Lodi, and Fun Too

World War II impacted every aspect of daily life in the United States. The economic disruption caused by more than 12 million American men leaving their jobs to fight overseas was profound. Household budgets squeezed tight as both scarcity and inflation roared. “Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without” became a popular saying.

Many Lodi women suddenly found themselves financial stewards of their households. They coped with sugar, gas, and tire rationing, planted victory gardens, appeared bare-legged in public (silk stockings now being too luxurious) and scrimped on fabric with plunging necklines. If Lodi’s remaining men and boys needed a new suit, it came with thin lapels and cuffless pants. Families saved their newspapers, scrap iron, and rubber for recycling. And many mothers left their young children in a new Day Nursery to make time for paid employment working in Lodi’s fields, orchards, and packing sheds.

While reading issues of the *Lodi News-Sentinel* during World War II, one is struck by the constant demands for time and money from the already hard-

pressed families. With the women now working, local air wardens went door to door to pressure residents into giving 10% of their income for war bonds. Daily appeals included: eradicate infantile paralysis (polio), Invite a Soldier to Dinner, give to the Scout fund, buy an American Legion Poppy for Memorial Day, support the USO and its Victory Books for Servicemen campaign, join the Women’s Ambulance and Defense Unit, volunteer at the Day Nursery... when Lodi’s Red Cross was unable to recruit volunteer knitters and closed its sewing room, one imagines the exhausted women of Lodi muttering, “I just *can’t!*”

Residents received conflicting messages regarding proper use of their little spare time: No one wanted to appear frivolous during wartime, but must *every* minute be spent winning the war?

Authorities encouraged teachers and state workers to spend their vacation time in the fields. Lodi considered closing the saloons from 6am–6pm to get more men into the fields. The State Board of Agriculture announced that Californians should be picking crops instead of enjoying county fairs.

Finally, the health benefits of recreation were remembered. The Calaveras Jumping Frog Jubilee was allowed again and promoted as a relaxation “effort.” The Lodi Rotary Club officially encouraged recreation. Men’s softball teams from each of Lodi’s businesses vied for glory and women’s teams formed. The American Legion picnic and the Dakota picnic (for Lodi’s “Germans from Russia who lived a while in the Dakotas”) took place and motorcycle races began roaring in the new Lodi Bowl (now

the Grape Bowl) despite concerns for gas and tires. Hedy Lamarr’s scandalous movie, *Ecstasy*, opened at the State Theatre at 23 W Elm Street (now Merlot Hall).

One can only imagine the hilarity at the Lodi Theatre when the Lodi 20-30 Club recruited prominent businessmen – including Mayor C.B. Bull – to appear in *Midnight Follies*. The men performed a “cutie” chorus line dance, pranced about in the latest fashions, and elected a “queen”!

Lodi’s California State Guard/Home Guard

After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, US military officials recognized the possibility that America would soon join the European defense. In September 1941 the entire US National Guard, over 300,000 soldiers, was “called up,” meaning that members were reclassified from being civilians who maintained military preparedness part-time to being full-time, active-duty Army soldiers. With this pre-war mobilization, the National Guard provided the War Department with a wealth of trained, deployable units. Many former National Guard members fought valiantly as Army soldiers at the Pearl Harbor attack and other conflicts.

The 1941 departure of California’s National Guard members left a vacuum in California’s state defense. “All the armories would be left empty and... cities left naked of military protection,” thundered Colonel Rupert Hughes, a World War I veteran, on the need for additional state defense. Accordingly, plans were laid for a new, voluntary California State Guard.

The California State Guard was composed of men who were not subject to being drafted due to being too young, too old, with family dependents, or disabled, and also included able-bodied men whose draft number hadn’t been called yet. A large proportion of the State Guard came from the American Legion, which describes itself as “a patriotic veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness.”

When Lodi’s California National Guard Battery F of the 143rd Field Artillery departed, the Lodi Provisional Infantry Company of the State Guard

took shape. Enlistments began at the Armory Building, 333 N Washington Street, in late September 1941 with Verne W. Hoffman commissioned as captain. (Hoffman was elected State Senator in 1951.) Many older enlistees had been members of the California National Guard in their younger days.

Lodians were asked to contribute \$2,000 as Monday-night drills commenced. “Many expenses will arise in the conduct of the unit for which there is no provision in federal or state money, and it does not seem right these men who are supplying their time should also have to dig down in their own pockets for the money that will be needed to properly operate the unit,” said Col. Walter Garrison, himself a veteran of three wars. With Lodians’ support, the State Guard recruits – including Lodi’s father-son duo, Boyd Mitchell and Woodrow Mitchell – soon drilled proudly in their new uniforms.

In November 1942, the members were formally inducted into the State Guard at the Armistice Day celebration at Lodi Stadium (another name for the Grape Bowl). Their unit would now be called the 10th Regiment of State Guard Company B.

Despite these early efforts, Lodi’s State Guard unit would always struggle to have enough members to reach regimental strength. Following the December 7 Pearl Harbor attack, the new State Guardsmen were given 30 days during which they could resign, after which they would be subject to active-duty mustering within the state. Thirty-six members of Lodi’s 78 State Guardsmen resigned. Morale suffered as Guardsmen began struggling with the pub-

lic perception that they were unnecessary and that local police should be able to defend the state. Legislators in Sacramento squabbled about the Guard's purpose and limited enlistment to 7,000 active-duty California Guardsmen with 20,000 in reserve – these last to be called up only in the event of invasion or insurrection.

Chronically understaffed and underfunded, in early 1942 Lodi's remaining State Guards – mostly high school students – nevertheless quit their paying jobs and mobilized active-duty to protect California's dams, reservoirs, and similar valuable property, relieving federal troops who could then be sent overseas. For this work, privates in the Guard were promised \$2 /day.

Almost immediately, California fell behind in paying its Guardsmen, resorting to the state emergency fund to catch up on partial back pay.

Following a short initial assignment, Lodi's Guardsmen were assigned to guard duty at Camp Christiansen, east of Sacramento. In February 1942 the Lodi Civitan Club drove up to entertain camp residents with a Valentine's Day dance including orchestra, refreshments, and free cigarettes.

Meanwhile the State Guard reserve members back in Lodi continued their Monday-night drills and accepted responsibility for training the local Civil Air Patrol – private citizens who were pilots with aircraft that could be used to fly sensitive missions along the coast, alerting US military personnel to enemy ships.

As the months passed, the California State Guard's inefficient management deteriorated. In Sacramento, accusations flew of Guardsmen misusing state automobiles, stealing firearms, and improperly accounting for expenses. It seemed many of Guard's officers had been transferred from the State Relief Administration, which had been organized in the 1930s to distribute state and federal funds to remedy Great Depression woes, and these workers entered the State Guard at a higher level than they were qualified for in order to preserve their paychecks.

In 1943 Governor Earl Warren called for a new Home Guard that would replace the State Guard. Active-duty Home Guardsmen's service areas would be limited to the members' own county. Reserve volunteers would be permitted to serve state-wide during emergencies if so desired.

Lodi's California State Guard 10th Regiment Company B was called back from active duty and abruptly dissolved. Members were informed that if 34 men of genuine ability re-enlisted, they'd be called the Home Guard 5th Battalion 24th Regiment B Company.

Enlistments of rifle-trained Lodians who were between the ages of 18 and 65, of good physical health, and male citizens of California, began with the enticement that there would be no more sentry duty and that any active-duty call within San Joaquin

County would likely happen only in the event of an enemy invasion, when everyone would jump to fight anyway. Eighteen men signed up immediately.

“Like an insurance policy that hasn't been used,” Lodi's home guard would have paid off handsomely if the need had arisen.

As Company B struggled to reach 34 enlistments, recruiters touted the training they'd get and invited the public (males only) to see *Baptism by Fire*, a movie that showed typical deaths on the front lines and how to avoid such ends through proper training. Months passed and the *Lodi News-Sentinel* began blaming low enlistments on public complacency.

Finally in January 1944 the new company was ready. Still short of funds, the members held a dance to raise money for their mess fund (food). The USO came to Eagles Hall at 217 E Lockeford Street. With a mission “to strengthen the well-being of the people serving in America's military,” the USO provided a dinner with orchestra for 70 Guardsmen and family members.

On September 2, 1945 World War II ended. In 1946 Lodians received word that their National Guard heroes were headed home. As the California Home Guard stood down, Lodi's Guardsmen were commended for their steadfast readiness, year after year.

Goodbye to Lodi's Japanese

Following Japan's attacks on Pearl Harbor and other Pacific sites on December 7, 1941, the US decided to remove all people with 1/16th or more Japanese lineage from the West Coast. This wartime incarceration is well documented by sources such as the National Archives and the History Channel.

In early January 1942 non-citizen US residents of German or Italian descent and almost all US residents of Japanese descent were reclassified as "enemy aliens." Men in these groups who attempted to join the US military were turned away. (By the end of January second-generation males of Japanese descent regained the right to serve.)

In February 1942 enemy aliens of German and Italian descent, and almost everyone of Japanese descent, who were living in military zones (including all of California) were restricted to traveling within five miles of their homes.

In March Lieutenant-General J.L. DeWitt issued Public Proclamation No. 3, which established a curfew between 8pm and 6am for all enemy aliens and everyone of Japanese descent and forbade them from possessing firearms, radios, or cameras. Lodi's Japantown, centered on Main Street at Pine Street, was barricaded off as authorities searched homes, looking for evidence of spying or covert communi-

cations. Farmers of Japanese descent were warned to continue their high productivity while a new non-Japanese farmers' co-op made arrangements to take over their farms – this last proved difficult because many able-bodied non-Japanese farmers had already left for military service.

In April, Works Progress Administration laborers stopped work on expanding Lodi's sewers to begin building barracks at the Stockton Assembly Center (now called the County Fairgrounds).

Soon Lodi received Civilian Exclusion Order No. 70, which detailed the plan by which Lodi's residents of Japanese descent would be evacuated. The prospective evacuees were told they could bring only what they could carry. A scramble to sell property at fire-sale prices ensued and Japantown residents began hammering boards over their windows and doors. While the bank accounts of residents of Japanese descent had initially been frozen, the policy was reversed to encourage deposits as the camps would not have banks. A War Service Center opened at 125 N Stockton Street to help with the transition.

Japantown's families were summoned to the Armory at 333 N Washington Street for intake interviews. Starting on May 18, 1942 the families climbed aboard Greyhound buses headed for the Stockton Assembly Center, where they waited under guard until October while their final camp was being built. Most of Lodi's approximately 800 residents of Japanese descent were sent by train to the Rohwer (Arkansas) internment camp for the duration.



(above) May 14, 1942 Inside the Lodi National Guard Armory building, a family of Japanese descent is interviewed for evacuation.

(right) May 19, 1942 Lodians of Japanese descent arrive at the Stockton Assembly Center. Their identification tags and family groups are checked by officials as they leave the buses.

Photos by Dorothea Lange, from the National Archives



Two Lodians who today wish to remain anonymous told this writer that as children they were glad to go to the internment camp. In 1942 they were in elementary school and experienced or heard about racial taunting and rock throwing. One reports that a Terminus house inhabited by people of Japanese descent was set on fire the night before the residents left for the Assembly Center. The children were reassured by their parents that they were leaving California to go to a safe place that had high fences and guards to watch over them. At the time both children believed their parents' interpretation of events.

Lodians Isamu "Sam" Funamura and Eddie Masui were members of the new California State Guard before they were pulled into the internment system. In June 1942 Masui, previously known to Lodians as the "tomato king" and as the Guard's "little corporal," was interned in the Walerga Assembly Center near Sacramento. He worked as a police officer within the camp, writing to the *Lodi News-Sentinel* about his continuing night duty: "when we were in the Guards my shift started at midnight; well, [in Walerga] my shift starts at 10pm and runs to 6am, so that's that." In November 1942 Sam Funamura, also a farmer, wrote from Rowher: "Here we are at last – 'Arkies'... This is really an immense place. Ten thousand acres of virgin soil and dense forest. The soil is adobe and clay and muck when it rains... We really miss the good old Lodi sand loam." Funamura would spend only a few months in Rowher before he and a few other Japanese-Americans were chosen to work in Chicago as machinists. By mid-1944 10,000 Californians of Japanese descent were working outside of the camps in midwestern communities. Eddie Masui was employed in Ogden, Utah.

When Sam Funamura returned to Lodi in May 1944, he said that seeing the first vineyards made him feel like crying, "it was so good to see home."

"Lodi During WWII" will continue in a future issue...

Farewell To Lodi Said By Japanese

To the People of Lodi—

The time has come when we must say goodbye to the people and places that we have come to love and cherish.

It is especially hard to part with the good people of Lodi, for this is one place where we have been made to feel that we were an integral part of the community. Lodi has always been good to us, one community where race, creed, or color mattered not. Truly a Democratic community.

This is why, besides other things, it is so hard to leave. But, if by leaving in this manner, we can contribute a small bit to the ultimate victory of our United States of America, we feel that it is our duty to make this change as gracefully as possible. So, until the day that our government of the United States of America may see fit to allow us back within your midst again, with sincere hopes for your Health, Happiness, and Prosperity, we remain, Sincerely Yours,

Lodi Japanese American Citizens' League
Sam Funamura, V.P.

Lodi News-Sentinel May 21, 1942

Key Differences in the Treatment of US Residents of German and Italian Descent vs Japanese Descent

- Immigrants from Germany and Italy were offered a path to US citizenship. Until 1952, immigrants from Japan were not.
- During WWII, all non-citizen US residents of German and Italian descent were classified as enemy aliens, but their descendants born as citizens on US soil were not. First-generation residents of Japanese descent, none of whom were permitted US citizenship, were classified as enemy aliens. Their descendants who were born on US soil (and had been considered US citizens at birth) were re-classified from citizens to enemy aliens.
- Almost all 120,000 US residents of Japanese descent were subject to internment. Around 11,000 residents of German descent and 400 residents of Italian descent were also interned – by law, only non-citizen German and Italian enemy aliens could be interned, but their citizen family members sometimes joined them in the camps.

Our Favorite Memories of Lodi Lake

Lodi Lake will soon re-open after months of renovation! Let's share our treasured memories of "the Jewel of Lodi."

Carla (Witt) Cicerello

In 1954 I began visiting Lodi Lake for family picnics, feeding the ducks, and exploring with my brother Lyle, who was 11 years older than me. We lived on S Pleasant Street. Most of the summer days Lyle rode his bike to Lodi Lake with our dog Ginger in a wooden box on the back of his bike.

I later got a Schwinn bike and rode to Lodi Lake with friends Debbie Ferrari and Kathy Gruber – we all got bikes for Christmas. We would spend the day on the beach there. Lodi Lake had a mound around the Turner Road side. You could lay out your towel and spend the whole afternoon watching swimmers and enjoying ice cream from the shack down by the paddle board dock.

When I applied for my first driver's license at age 16, the DMV sent me out with an employee to drive the course they set up in the Lodi Lake parking lot, which had tons of potholes. But I passed!

Through the years Lodi Lake became a spot for weddings, birthdays, and Lodi High School reunions. The boat races on the Fourth of July were always a hit. You could hear the boats getting ready and you needed to get to the Lake *early*.

Susanne (Freitas) Benbrook

One day around 11 years ago I was in our house, about a mile west of Lodi Lake. I heard a tapping at the front door. I looked out the window, but no one was there. A few minutes later the tapping happened again, so I opened the door slowly – and a Canada goose was standing there. I decided to feed it some milk and bread, which it ate.

I called the City of Lodi Animal Control

for advice, and they told me to absolutely not feed it as it would then not leave. Too late!

After a few hours, I had to go on an errand. I opened the garage door and drove down the street. I heard some noise behind me – it was "my" goose, honking and flapping its wings to follow me. I stopped the car, opened up a back door, and he/she hopped in. And off we went!

I drove over to Lodi Lake. I saw a small group of Canada geese, so I opened the back door. Out my little friend hopped and quickly rushed off to join the group. At first it was not welcomed with much friendship, but eventually I could not pick it out from the rest of the group.

David C. Beckman

It was the summer of 1964, I believe. I lived on Rose Street with my family. There was a life-saving class at the Lodi High School East Campus pool. The final class was held at Lodi Lake. I was required to use the cross-chest carry and tired-swimmer's carry to receive my certificate. I remember how cold

In the mid-1940s my father would take us three kids to the kiddie pool at the lake on the really hot summer days.

Janice (Bettencourt) Roth



A young boy pulls on the hand crank of a Model T Ford, used to shuttle folks from Lodi to Woodbridge via Lodi Lake (then called Smiths Lake) in 1915.

Parked next to the Ford is the combination ice cream wagon and real estate office operated by Charles Smith. Note that the three-room house is available for \$7 per month, utilities included.

-Photo courtesy of the Bank of Stockton

the snow-melt water was while I pulled my “victim” from the north shore to the south shore swim beach. I succeeded!

Lynn Benbrook

In 1955 the annual flood from Spring runoff for the Sierras was contained by volunteers and Boy Scout Troop 99. They threw sandbags around the south side of the lake to protect Turner Road

Everyone remembers the hydroplane boat races that were started by Mr. Chuck Parsons. Every 4th of July from the late 1940s to the early 1960s we enjoyed the races.

Sheryl Carey

I remember that when I was around 12 (1964), we borrowed Rosemary Fields paddleboard trailer and hooked it up to a bike and then put my sister Amy’s paddleboard on it. We rode bikes to the lake and put the paddleboard in at the boat launch area. After paddling around the lake for a while, we went to the north side of the lake where there was a tunnel under the road. We went through the tunnel and into a small body of water that met the river.

The lake didn’t have fences around it, or entry fees. Anyone could come in over the grassy hills. The berm nearest the street with the houses on it was known as “Hippie Hill.” There was one turnstile at the entrance to the beach. Fifty cents would get you through to the kiddie pool, designated swimming area and a large sandy beach.

Lodi Lake was just “the lake.” There was the boat launch ramp, a few picnic tables and the toilets. The lake provided access to the river upon which skiers skimmed across the glassy waters. Today’s picnic areas were just grass. Blackberry bushes grew in abundance and at the edge of the lake. The wilderness area was just wilderness where one could tromp through the foliage and find a perfect swimming spot or swing off the rope.

We would gather blackberries until our hands were blue and bring some home for pies and jam.

One day, two friends and I (we were 17) parked by the boat ramp and went walking. One of the girls went into the meadow-like area where Williamson

Park is now. She returned and said, “Guess what I found!” We went to look and met four French boys who were going around the world. In California, they were doing itinerant farm work. They were in Lodi working the grapes. We got to talking and they said they were camping there. We said, “Oh no, you come with us.” We all went to my house and I showed the French boys to my mother (historian Naomi Carey). She welcomed them in and they stayed at our house for a month until their work was done. From there they moved on to Porterville and many places beyond. We became life-long friends and still visit each other.

I got my first kiss at Lodi Lake in 1969.
Patti (Swope) Reich Pugh

Vicky Carey

In the mid- to late 1960s the wilderness area had a Miwok display with teepee (bark house) you could walk into, a big half-circle wooden bench, and a placard. Eventually kids tore it down.

The Belt and Suspenders Man was filmed at Lodi Lake. It was written, directed and produced by Lodi-an Don Levy with a cast of Lodi High School teachers.

There used to be horses owned by Kathy Odor in the area to the left of the wilderness area road.

The fishing dock was built in memory of Parks and Recs Superintendent Dwight Dauber.

Of course, I remember cruising: going in and out of Lodi Lake as many times as you wanted without paying a fee, driving slowly around the lake to see who was out and about, maybe stopping to chat.

Alex Acosta

I think it was in the 1980s that we had the Thanksgiving Day tradition of “Pig Bowl.” Lodi Lake would be drained by then and junior high school kids played a big football game in the muck!

Coming Programs
The Lodi Historical Society’s programs are on summer break until
Wednesday, September 25, at 7pm.

President's Message

Greetings Lodi Historical Members,

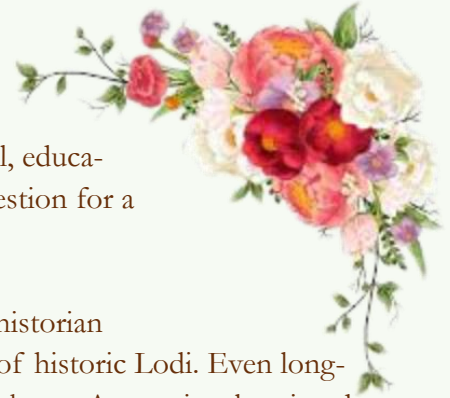
During the past season of our monthly programs, we have enjoyed the historical, educational, and entertaining presentations of dynamic guest speakers. If you have a suggestion for a speaker or topic for the next season starting in September, please email me at mjoutofthebox@att.net. I will welcome your input.

With some lovely weather ahead, you may be interested in arranging a date with historian Alane Dashner, featured in *The New Lodi Historian* Spring Issue, for her walking tour of historic Lodi. Even long-time Lodians have exclaimed of learning so much history about Lodi that they never knew. As previously printed, her tours are free on behalf of the Lodi Historical Society. If you are so inclined, the Society will gratefully accept your donation toward the leasing and restoration of Lodi's original City Hall and Fire House at 114 N Main Street, to become the Lodi History Museum. Email Alane at ExploreLodiCA@gmail.com to arrange your tour.

If you missed the CBS News Channel 13 coverage in April of the 114 N. Main St. restoration project/future site of the Lodi Historical Museum and Lodi Professional Firefighters Union Hall, it's not too late to view it. You can find this taping on Facebook on the "Lodi, California Historical Society" page. Scroll down to Scott Hamilton's two video entries. Scott, our Project Leader, and Anthony Moore, Firefighter, take you through a portion of this historic building, describing the project thus far.

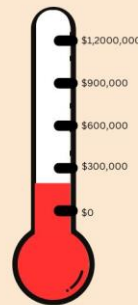
One last mention: Our curator has a request for Lodi vintage wooden coat hangers and yardsticks with the business name, address, and phone number. You may contact Janice Roth by text or call 209-608-2778. I wish you pleasant enjoyment of your summer months' activities with family and friends!

Mary Jane East, President, Lodi Historical Society



Welcome, New Members

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Carolle Bradley | Ralph Clark |
| Bob & Chryl Mau | Nancy Mellor |
| Adam Nanninga | Michele Scardigli |
| Nancy St. Clair | Julie Wall |



Progress Toward Opening
Our Museum Here in Lodi
donate now

\$213,167
18%
as of June 1



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