

Nuggets from the Past

By Norman McLeod

Dorothy Tripp made a trip here, and stayed

Foresthill's old General Store, located at the northeast corner of Foresthill Road and Soap Street, originally was built in 1857 by two partners, Harding and Kennedy.

In 1862, S.S. Kennedy's remaining interest was purchased by J.G. Garrison who developed the business into one of the largest of its kind in the county.

In 1930, this market was bought by the late Dorothy (Burley) Tripp, who paid \$2,200 for it to Garrison's widow. This lady didn't want anything to do with the store, so Dorothy was persuaded to buy it by her brother-in-law, Matt Langstaff, Sr.

Dorothy, who was interviewed by me at her apartment in Auburn in 1980, recalled: "I bought the store with its entire stock, but there wasn't much. It was pretty well run down. Louis Remler, who operated the Foresthill Grocery across the street, was a big help to me. He told me how to mark up prices and how to establish a profit. I didn't know anything. The first time I bought gold from a miner I lost money, but it was the last time I did."

Dorothy first came to Foresthill as a young child. She was born in San Francisco in 1891. Her father was tubercular, and his doctor advised him to move to the mountains. So, the family came to Foresthill. Dr. Burleigh, his local physician, suggested to his wife that she take her husband back to San Francisco, where he wanted to die. This she did.

Dorothy continued: "The doctor told my mother to take us girls - my older sister and I - back to the mountains to escape the 'galloping consumption.' We returned to Foresthill and never regretted it. My sister lived to be 90, and here am I, 89 and still going strong.

"I received a very good education in our grammar school. I would say much better

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than the kids get today. I was one of the good students. They gave us homework and my mother saw to it that we did it. I think homework has a lot to do with a good education. I graduated, and a few years later I left town for jobs in Newcastle and then San Francisco.

"As a child, I was a big girl ... quite chubby, so I couldn't run fast. As kids, we mostly played softball outdoors, but I was not good at it. I was too slow. I loved to hike, even when I grew up I walked alone a lot. I hiked to Todd's Valley many times when it was a place with Indians. There was a spot on the river called Cash Rock and I often walked down there.

"I never was much of a dancer. I used to attend public dances but I was one of the wallflowers. My sister was a good dancer and the men wanted to dance with her. It was kind of a hardship on my boyfriends to take me to a dance."

When Dorothy was about 18, she met a young fellow named Norman McLeod. "I wish I had a picture of him to show you," she said, smiling. "I'm sure he was no relation to you. He came here with a miner named Fletcher. I never dated this McLeod fellow. I was sort of a loner as a young person. I was popular, but didn't have marriage on my mind. I always wanted to work, to make something of myself. I held the theory that I didn't want to be poor when I got old."

In 1940, she married Roland Tripp, a retired policeman from Detroit. They lived in Oakland for seven years, then moved to Foresthill where Dorothy operated the telephone office before she acquired the store.

Mr. Tripp would have nothing to do with the store; it was too confining. "He had the mining bug," she said. "He met a man interested in mining. They wanted me to put some money into their mine but I refused, saying I'd buy all the gold they found."

Dorothy operated her market during the depression era. She discovered she had a weakness for families with children. She issued them credit because she couldn't stand to see young children "do without things. I'd sell them food and patent medicines on credit. I made a good many friends this way, and when World War II began and most

everyone found work, they all paid me. Besides, I had to sell on credit to stay in business.”

In 1941 she sold her store to Matt Langstaff, Jr., who ran it another 30 years.

Dorothy was talkative this day in 1980, sometimes answering my questions but mostly reminiscing. Her voice was strong, and she was enjoying herself. She continued with her first-person narrative.

“Who worked for me in the store? Let’s see, the first one was Doulton Burner, just a kid - 15-years-old. He has done well for himself and he always tells me he got his start from me. Who else? Well, there was Dorothy Brockett and Buster Chappel and Lena Gonzales. She was Cap’s wife. She worked only a short while. Then there were Alice Leavitt and Miriam Orena, who was the last one to work for me.

“All these people became good friends with each other and with me. I get the nicest letters from them. But, it’s sad today. I go to Foresthill and I don’t know anyone. When you think of being raised in a town where you also made your living and today, when you visit that town and feel alone, it’s sad. A strange feeling.

“In my mother’s day you never saw a married woman in a bar; you saw her at home with her children. They were home-bodies. It’s so different today. Women are more socially inclined. I’m not saying it’s wrong.

“Bath was a mining town. Two sisters lived there in a beautiful home - a Mrs. Hosner and Nellie Fuller. They were moneyed people and took quite a fancy to me. Every so often they’d hire a horse and buggy and go somewhere, like down to Yankee Jim’s for dinner. They’d take me with them, and of course as a kid I thought that was really something.

“I remember the school in Bath. I used to visit Bath a lot. Miriam Orena and her sister Margaret (she became Mrs. Charles Finning) lived down there. Miriam painted a picture of the old schoolhouse from memory. She and I became good friends.

“I knew Last Chance when it was a big town. One of my best friends, the late Elaine Powell, and I grew up together there. Her uncle and aunt ran the store there for many years. They’re both gone.

“I tell you, everyone’s gone.”