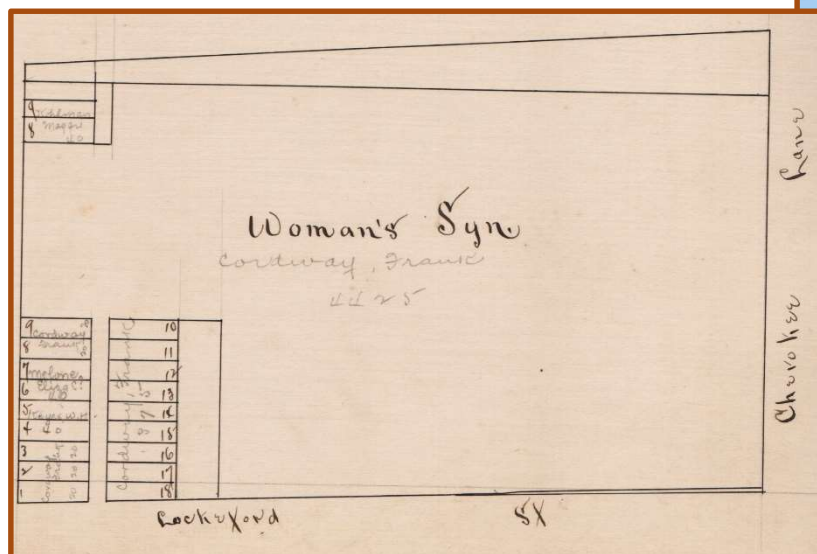


THE NEW LODI HISTORIAN



Lodi plat map from 1912 (left) and the site today. Historic images courtesy of the San Joaquin County Historical Society and Museum.

The Woman's Syndicate Addition to Lodi

by Alane K. Dashner

The lifetime achievements of Laura DeForce Gordon, Lodi's most famous resident, were many and most are well covered in our previous newsletters. We are pleased in this edition to draw from recently revealed documents and recordings in the San Joaquin County Historical Museum archives. They describe a forgotten chapter in Lodi's history: The Woman's Land Syndicate of San Joaquin County...

In 1850 when California became the 31st U.S. State, its married women quickly found their financial rights torn away. As a Spanish colony from 1769 until 1821, and as the Mexican territories of Alta and Baja Californias from 1821 until 1848, California had used the French-Spanish system of civil law in which married women kept control of assets they brought into the marriage. Each spouse could write a will naming separate heirs for their separately held assets. All assets gained by either spouse during the marriage were considered community property to be managed by the surviving partner if one spouse died.

All that changed when the new American state of California became subject to common-law practices of the former British colonies Back East.

California brides suddenly found that they disappeared legally when they said, "I do." Lacking

a legal identity, a married woman could not own property. Her husband took possession of any assets she brought into the marriage and he legally owned any wages or inheritances either spouse gained during the marriage. He could spend every penny on whatever he alone chose. Only if she outlived him would she gain limited rights to assets he'd accumulated – after she'd gone through the probate process and paid off whatever debts he'd incurred.

The years between 1850 and 1870 brought much discussion of women's status to the California Statehouse. Although the 1850 state constitution theoretically gave married women control over their separate property, the all-male State Assembly and Senate enacted laws otherwise.

One chivalrous argument for not allowing married women control of assets was that women

were by nature incapable: “it is due to every wife, and to the children of every family, that the wife’s property should be protected [by her husband].”

Frank self-interest was at the heart of some men advocating for more female empowerment: “Having some hopes that I may be wedded... I do not think that we can offer a greater inducement for women of fortune to come to California. [Financial empowerment] is the very best provision to get us wives that we can introduce into the Constitution.”

But by 1870, California’s married women were even less financially secure than the married women in America’s former British colonies.

Laura and Clara: Equal Employment Rights

Longtime readers of this newsletter are familiar with Laura DeForce Gordon’s exploits (*The DeForce Sisters*, Winter 1992, and *Laura DeForce Gordon*, Summer 1993 – both available on the new LHS website). Laura was Lodi’s most famous resident, usually in a good way.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1838 and raised in Wisconsin, as a teenager Laura took her few years of schooling and parlayed them into a lucrative speaking career, fascinating crowds with her eloquent passion and spiritual trances. On the lecture circuit Laura met suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Laura soon dedicated herself to the cause of women’s rights.

She married Dr. Charles Gordon in 1862 and in 1867 headed west with him, lecturing along the way. By 1870 when Dr. and Mrs. Gordon arrived in Lodi, Laura was a skilled orator, railing against the constraints on American women. She made herself well-known in the California Statehouse and travelled relentlessly, speaking on women’s need for the right to vote. She even attempted a run for State Senate in 1871 despite widespread outrage at the idea of a woman holding office.

In 1879 Laura DeForce Gordon and her San Jose ally, Clara Shortridge Foltz, became California’s first two female attorneys. Around 1876 Clara’s husband had abandoned her and their five children. Around 1878 Laura divorced Dr. Gordon

– it’s said that he had been revealed as a bigamist. With neither woman able to access California’s widow benefits, they must have keenly felt the frightening effects of financial jeopardy.

Ingenuity and energy defined the American suffragist movement. Clara drafted what became known as the “Woman Lawyer’s Bill” and had her district’s state senator, who was sympathetic to women’s rights, introduce it early in the 1878 legislative session. Clara, Laura, and other advocates argued their position brilliantly. They succeeded in getting their bill through the Senate and Assembly and then enshrined in the California Constitution of 1878 with the wording that no person would be disqualified from entering “any lawful business, vocation or profession on account of sex.”

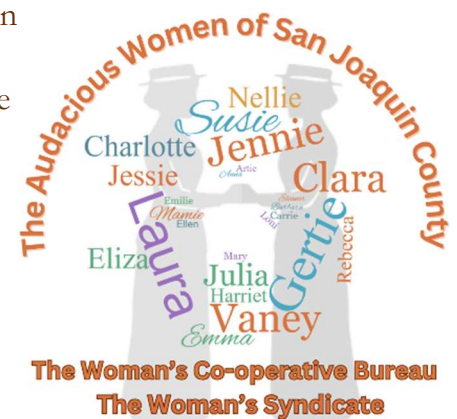
Laura and Susie: Partners for Prosperity

Laura’s busy legal practice stabilized her finances, but she continued her campaign for sweeping change in Sacramento. In 1884 she became the president of the California Woman Suffrage Society, a position she held for ten years.

Enter Susie Moreing Burr, born in 1846 in Dubuque, Iowa. Susie was from one of Dubuque’s early pioneer families. In 1867 she married Professor David Peacock Burr, whose ancestors were with William Penn at the founding of Pennsylvania. David and Susie moved to California in the early 1880s and farmed and ranched near Stockton before moving to Lodi.

When Susie Burr met Laura DeForce Gordon, sparks must have flown. Based on what followed, they must have asked each other “Why are we women not better represented in the business world?” and “Why do we passively allow only the men to get rich in real estate?”

Together the two launched an ambitious campaign to increase local women’s power and prosperity.



Step 1: On November 23, 1887, Susie and Laura gathered like-minded women in the Stockton Board of Trade room. They laid the groundwork for a Woman's Co-operative Bureau, electing Laura as President and Susie as First Vice President. They tasked themselves with promoting business and tourism in San Joaquin County. As they prepared marketing exhibits for the 1889 National Education Association convention and for the 1894 World's Fair, both in San Francisco, they asked that their expenses be reimbursed as men's expenses would be. They ran into a wall of resistance to their work:

"We ladies have begun a work that we expect to grow to magnificent proportions, and all we will ask is for the gentlemen to give us a little financial aid, which, in our infancy and feebleness, we so much need."

—Mrs. L. Basilio and Mrs. D.P. Burr,

the Woman's Co-operative Bureau, Jan 3, 1888

No record is found that they were paid.

Step 2: Happily, the second part of their plan succeeded. On January 17, 1888, they incorporated The Woman's Syndicate. The By-Laws read

"The object of the Syndicate is to enable women to place their little surplus money in real estate, and under the supervision of a Board of Directors, which will give time to thoroughly look up all investments, and to take advantage of rare offers in real estate by reason of our co-operative investments, and to sell, or to improve and sell at the highest possible figure, thus giving a dividend to the members."

With this legal maneuver, the women created a legal entity capable of owning property. Syndicate members could use the entity in different ways:

- A member could be passive, hoping the stronger members' investment decisions would pay off in Syndicate dividends for herself.
- An active member could direct the investments for the shared good of the Syndicate and herself, essentially buying her chosen real estate in the Syndicate's name.
- A married member who had a supportive male could use the Syndicate research to buy property directly and jointly in her name and his.

The Syndicate was structured as a joint stock

company with a capital of \$5,000 divided into shares of \$5 each. Its first Board of Directors listed

- Mrs. Susie M. Burr, President (married)
- Mrs. Clara Gage, Vice President (married)
- Mrs. Pennsylvania Crow, Treasurer (widowed at the 1880 Mussel Slough Tragedy, a land dispute between settlers and Southern Pacific)
- Mrs. Gertie DeForce Cluff, Secretary (married, Lodi's first publisher, Laura's younger sister)

Other members of the Bureau and Syndicate will be familiar to Lodi readers: Rebecca Ivory, Emma Sargent, Mamie Sollinger, and Julia Weber of Stockton. Dozens of local women joined. Of course, Attorney Laura DeForce Gordon represented the Syndicate at real estate auctions.

The Woman's Syndicate and its members began buying and selling property throughout California.

Laura DeForce Gordon, Real Estate Magnate

In the next years Laura, by then a financial powerhouse, bought and sold property in the foothills, Campo Seco, and many parcels in Lodi. According to her grand-niece, Merle Walker Hieb, Laura downscaled her legal practice to fit into her home on W. Lockeford Street (approximately where Duncan Press sits today) to give her more time to manage her landholdings.

This brings us to the Woman's Addition to Lodi. It was bounded by E. Lockeford Street to the south, N. Stockton Street to the west, Cherokee Lane – now called N. Washington Street – to the east, and Lawrence Avenue to the north. Today the Fraternal Order of Eagles and the Army National Guard buildings sit upon the site. Before that, it was a vineyard. Before that, it was... a colony for unmarried suffragists?

Through the Syndicate, Laura bought 24 acres from Ezekiel Lawrence, a founder of Lodi, whose 1879 residence was on that property. She had the land surveyed and improvements added.

AGREEMENT TO SELL.—E. Lawrence of Lodi to the Woman's Syndicate, the necessary right of way along Cherokee Lane for an electric motor road, for \$4,268.

Lawrence Addition, and Lodians began to forget Laura and her ambitions entirely.

Susie M. Burr, Real Estate Magnate

Time has been kinder to Susie M. Burr. Susie's husband, David, was apparently trustworthy and supportive: He championed Susie's real estate aspirations and provided the legal cover for her to begin buying property as far south as Fresno.

Susie Burr invested heavily in Lodi, buying much of Lodi north of Lockeford Street, west of Church. She created Burr's Additions #1 and #2 to Lodi. If you live around today's Van Buskirk Park or Vintage Church or call your area the "Burr neighborhood," you're on Susie's land.

Today we celebrate these early Lodi women for their vision, ingenuity, and courage, and we thank the California men who gave women the right to vote in 1911. Happy Women's History Month!

The Editor notes the particular difficulty of researching historic married women and their legal status. With their absence from legal records and their various combinations of first names, nicknames, maiden names, and married names, each subject to the irregular spelling of the day, every confirmed finding is a joy. Gratitude goes to Gail Erwin, Archivist at the San Joaquin County Historical Society & Museum; the Dubuque (Iowa) Historical Society; and Donna C. Schuele, who wrote "None Could Deny the Eloquence of This Lady": Women, Law, and Government in California, 1850-1890. *California History* Vol. 81, No. 3/4, 'Taming the Elephant: Politics, Government, and Law in Pioneer California' (2003), pp. 169-198 (30 pages). Published By: University of California Press.

E. Lawrence and the Woman's Syndicate to E. R. McKenzie—Lot 15 in block 4, Woman's Syndicate Addition to Lodi; \$5.

The Woman's Syndicate and E. Lawrence to E. Melone—Lots 6 and 7, block 4, Woman's Syndicate Addition to Lodi; \$5.

"The Woman's Syndicate" meant Laura DeForce Gordon. E.R. McKenzie and E. Melone were members of the Syndicate.

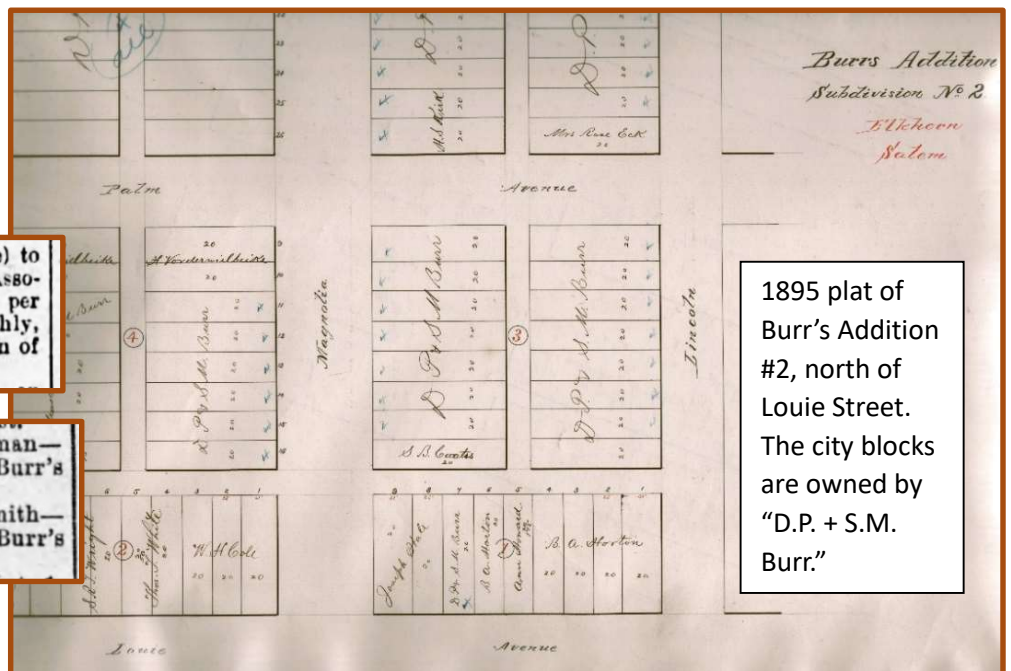
According to the *Stockton Evening Record*, it was Laura's "purpose to colonize the tract with unmarried suffragists exclusively." We can imagine Laura's high hopes as she measured the plots for her paradise of empowered, enfranchised women. Unfortunately, while multiple women bought the suffragist plots, no homes were ever built.

On the city plat of 1909, we see that after Laura's 1907 death the land had been annexed by the City of Lodi using the name "the Woman's Syndicate Addition to Lodi." It had also drifted from its original purpose as a hotbed of female activism. In 1909 Susie Burr (widowed in 1905) still owned plots 4 and 5 and Eliza Melone, also a founding member of the Woman's Co-operative Bureau (widowed in 1900), owned plots 6 and 7. But by 1909 Frank Cordway had acquired most of the rest of the Woman's Addition. He planted it as a vineyard and in 1923 petitioned City Council to abandon Laura's original streets and alleys so that he could subdivide the land into city blocks.

By the 1930s, city plats described the area simply as the

D. P. Burr and Susie M. Burr (his wife) to the Stockton Land, Loan and Building Association, for \$675 65, with interest at 6 per cent. per annum, interest payable monthly, on one acre in Burr's Addition to the town of Lodi.

D. P. Burr and wife to Lela Houseman—Lot 2, block 2, subdivision of lot 10, Burr's Addition to Lodi; \$5.
D. P. Burr and wife to Mary A. Smith—Lot 6, block 2, subdivision of lot 10, Burr's Addition to Lodi; \$5.



President's Message

Greetings Lodi Historical Society Members,

I hope you are welcoming signs of Spring by enjoying the many beautiful sights of nature and the longer daylight hours in which to appreciate them.

Rich Turner, award winning photographer, was the featured speaker at our February 28 program. With his spectacular photographs of the Delta region and his enhancing dialogue, Rich took us through the beautiful and historical "Delta Grandeur."

The evening opened with the installation of the re-elected LHS Board Members: Susanne Benbrook, Janice Roth, Gael Troughton, and newly elected, Alane Dashner. Thank you, Board Members, for your dedicated service to the Historical Society by promoting and preserving the history of Lodi.

Let's recognize the former Editor of *The New Lodi Historian*, Gael Troughton, for his resurrection of the publication by researching, writing, and editing eight quarterly issues. In addition to his writing of fascinating historical topics, Gael accentuated each issue with photos from his vast collection of photographs and postcards. Thank you, Gael, for the great success of those issues.

We are grateful to Alane Dashner for assuming the role as Editor of *The New Lodi Historian*. Alane's first publication on "Lodi During World War II: Part One" has been very favorably received by our readers. "Part Two" is expected this summer.

I urge you to renew your membership if you have not yet done so. As a member you will continue to receive *The New Lodi Historian*, be informed of our programs and activities, and take pride in belonging to a fine organization.

Mary Jane East

President, Lodi Historical Society



The Woman Wearing Many Hats

Interviewed by Judith A. Halstead

We would like to introduce you to Alane Dashner, a woman who wears many hats, in other words, a woman who is balancing many



jobs, including Lodi tour guide, Haggin museum docent, LHS Board member, LHS webmaster, and now LHS newsletter editor. After a wonderful series of *The New Lodi Historian*, edited by Gael Troughton, Alane is now the editor of our publication. Our interviewer asked Alane about the other hats she is wearing and her special interests.

Interviewer: What are you having fun with in Lodi?

Alane: People are so interesting to me. As a transplant from Louisiana, I'm curious about the people in Lodi and how they live their lives. There are lots of multi-generation families here that each faced the challenges of their times just as we're facing the challenges of our times. I'm getting a kick out of hearing folks' stories of how present-day Lodi came to be.

Interviewer: What interests you about being editor of *The New Lodi Historian*?

Alane: For many years I worked in publishing: at different times I was a professional writer, editor, proofreader, photographer, graphic designer and web designer. When Gael indicated that he'd like to transition off the newsletter, I thought "I can help."

continued on page 8 >>

“Show and Tell” Fun at the January LHS Program

In case you missed this popular program, here are some highlights from members’ personal collections.

Jim and Penny Hamilton displayed their Japanese hibachi that dates from the late 1800s. In 1974 Jim was a naval officer stationed in Yokosuka, Japan. Penny was touring a nearby town and noticed a trash pile behind a small pub. “I couldn’t resist looking!” she said. She found a grimy box-like object and offered the pub owner \$15 for it. Once she had it cleaned, she realized she’d found a beautiful portable hibachi made of copper, which was plentiful in Japan. The large center well is for cooking food, the three small upper wells are for warming tall ceramic saki bottles, and the bottom valve is for dispensing hot tea. In this photo, the door to the hotbox is open – this is where the charcoal would have been inserted. The boxlike structure is double-walled so that hot water can circulate around the compartments. “I don’t know how the copper-cleaner did it, but it’s just as shiny today as it was in 1974,” Jim said.



*Jim and Penny show where saki bottles would be warmed.
The hibachi is still shiny after all these years.*

New member **Andrei Pischnalnikoff** brought a “Wonder Battery” quackery device (fake medicine) called the Actina. It was invented by William C. Wilson – neither a doctor nor



Andrei shows off the amazing Actina.

professor – who patented it in 1886. It cost \$10 and more than a hundred thousand were sold.

The Actina promised to cure deafness, blindness, and catarrh (build-up of mucus in the sinus and/or throat). The bullet-shaped cannister contained multiple ingredients including German Mustard Oil which when mixed together created a burning sensation. If you had an ear problem, you were instructed to open the small top and press your ear against the opening until you felt the burn. You’d repeat several times daily. To treat an eye problem, you’d flip the cannister, open the large end, and look into the opening. Every four months you were instructed to send it back to the manufacturers with \$4 so that the “battery” could be “recharged.” (And you thought leeches were bad!)

Liz Brusa shared the U.S. Army Officer ceremonial sword her father received at West Point in 1937. The blade is 33 inches long and is believed to be made of stainless steel since it never needs polishing. James Francis Faber was born and raised in Lodi and married his sweetheart, Ruth McCoy, on his West Point graduation day. After moving his growing family from state to state as he rose through the Army ranks, Lieutenant Colonel Faber and his 83rd Infantry Division arrived in Normandy 10 days after the D-Day invasion. He was killed in heavy fire while liberating the French town of Sainteny. Liz was told the story of how her father and a PFC crawled up the outside of a German tank and began firing inside the turret, killing the German troops. For his bravery that day, Lt. Col. Faber was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. "Every time I go back to Sainteny," Liz said, "I'm treated like a queen. All the townspeople show up for champagne and dinner."

Sometime in the 1990s **Alex and Margaret Acosta** were antique shopping in Berkeley. They noticed a small portrait for sale next to a cityscape.



Alex and Emma, together at home.



Liz poses with her father's West Point sword at Lodi's Victory Park.

Painted by John Cranch in 1842, the portrait of Emma Matilda Wood was once in the Smithsonian's collection in Washington DC but was presumably de-accessioned. "In my opinion, Emma is homely, said Alex. "I really wanted the cityscape." "But I really wanted Emma, and we were spending my money that I got as a work bonus!" Margaret laughed. "Yes, she's very plain, but the girl had good parents who were willing to pay not just for a silhouette, but for a real painting by an itinerant artist." Alex must have grown fond of Emma through the years, since she hangs just above his favorite red chair.

Welcome, New Members

Jolene Chandler Gladys Corlett
 Janet Fortier Beverly Gabrielson
 Linda Hammons
 Candice & Patrick Hutcheson
 Mayvis Kundert Susan Little
 Myron & Theresa Marzolf
 Stanley Rew Rich Turner

Coming Events & Programs

All regularly scheduled programs are free and the public is welcome. Unless otherwise noted, programs are held in the Holz Room, Hutchins Street Square, 125 S. Hutchins St. Lodi, CA.

Wednesday, March 27, 2024 7:00p.m.

***Location:** Hutchins Street Square *Pisano Room**

Presenter: David Stuart.

Topic: "Indigenous peoples of the northern San Joaquin Valley and the Delta."

Wednesday, April 24, 2024 7:00p.m.

Presenter: William (Bill Maxwell), author and former owner of three Stockton bookstores.

Topic: "Anecdotal Recollections of a Skid Row Bookseller," from his book *Booklegger*.

Wednesday, May 22, 2024 7:00p.m.

Presenter: Andrei Pischalnikoff.

Topic: "Strange and Dangerous Medicines and Devices of the Past."

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Gael Troughton

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>> **Many Hats**, *continued from page 5*

Interviewer: What historical figure would you most like to spend time with?

Alane: I'd choose Mary Magdalen because I don't think she's been represented accurately and I'm afraid the truths of her life can't be known now. I'm very curious about the events of her time.

Interviewer: Do you have a favorite place and period of history you'd like to visit?

Alane: I would visit my hometown, New Orleans, around 1718 when it was founded. I'm descended from Joseph Chauvin, who created Tchoupitoulas Plantation immediately upriver from the French Quarter.

Interviewer: What did you like to read as a child? What do you read now?

Alane: I'm told I always had my nose in a book! From an early age I read classic authors such as Jane Austen and Horatio Alger. I think that's how I realized my world could be bigger than Louisiana. Today I mostly keep up with the *New York Times* fiction recommend-



ations and of course am constantly reading California history.

Interviewer: What do you most want LHS members to know about you?

Alane: I want people to know the responsibility I feel in this position. I'm a storyteller in every form and will strive to represent the whole truth faithfully, respectfully, and in an entertaining way.

To arrange a walking tour of historic Lodi, email Alane at ExploreLodiCA@gmail.com. Her tours are free on behalf of the Lodi Historical Society. If you are so moved, the Society will gratefully accept your donation toward the leasing and renovation of Lodi's old City Hall building on North Main Street, soon to become the Lodi History Museum.

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