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Holmes And Larabee--Live And Let Live

The Ebie Parkers' pretty home beside Eel river.

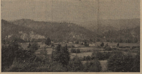
The Isom Anderson home is Holmes' postoffice.

The quaint Georgeson school in Larabee valley.

Cute colt keeps a wary eye on photographer.

Jack and Gene McCarthy building new home.

Old Holmes store-postoffice still stands.


Panorama of Holmes taken from Charles Graggs' hillside residence.

COMMUNITY, RANCH AND RIVER BLEND INTO IDYLLIC SETTING

By CHET SCHWARZKOPF

Holmes is an attractive rural community located upon a fertile shelf of land adjoining the main Eel river, some forty miles south of Eureka. Highway 101 bounds it on one side, but does not pass through it. As a result, the visitor's first impression is of a peaceful and pretty place, set aside from the world's hurry-worry and rush. And the more you travel about the community, the more that impression grows.

Just across Eel river from Holmes is the noted Larabee Valley ranch, owned by the Pacific Lumber Company; and Holmes' "main street" is the road that leads to it. There is a summer bridge connecting the ranch with Holmes. But it is a durable summer bridges that only an extraordinary flood would be able to wipe out. The "P. L." knows how to build them.

Together, Holmes and Larabee constitute an Eden of their own. High cliffs of the Eel river run along the side opposite from the little town — and then drop abruptly away as Larabee valley opens to view. On the highway side, all stands of uncut redwoods, that are part of the state park system, make an evergreen boundary which is a thing of joy and beauty to behold.

And over the whole pastoral scene tower the everlasting hills that make Humboldt's scenery one of the world's most inspiring. Fortunate indeed are the people who can make their homes here, for at their beck and call is nature in her most benevolent mood. The outdoorsman, especially, finds the Holmes-Larabee domain a paradise; for some of Eel river's best fishing is right there, while the hills beyond offer almost unlimited scope to the hunter. And for the family who simply enjoys getting out on a picnic, the whole area is one big park, complete with river, woods, and uncrowded accomodations.

A LOOK ABOUT HOLMES

As you turn off highway 101 onto Holmes' thoroughfare, you are aware of an actual let-down from the nervous tension that seems automatically a part of highway driving these days. For here, no one seems to be in a smart streamlined hurry. The street is well paved and wide, and passers-by are apt to give you a friendly nod.

Even the homes along this street seem to reflect, in some intangible manner, the spirit of the community. A number of them are quite new, and more are building; for the tide of migration that has come to the west has eddied into side lanes like this.

But the over-all impression here is that of a well kept and self-respecting community. The homes are, for the most part, tree-shaded, and many of them have attractive white picket fences along their land fronts. Gardens, and fruitful orchards are a part of almost everyone's premises, and on the more rolling lands away from the river side, a number of attractive ranch homes seem to stand guard over the community at their feet.

The climate here, you are told, is one of Humboldt's best. It never gets too cold, or too warm — and an abundant rainfall keeps the countryside green the year 'round, including the forested hills. The soil is rich river bottom silt, for the most part, and Holmes long has been noted both for its truck produce, and apples, pears, and cherries. It is a flower gardener's elysium, too, as many a front yard that is a bower of color, will testify.

Holmes has its own postoffice, run by Isom Anderson, but it no longer has any stores. The automobile age, and consequent centering of market places, has put an end to many four-corners store whose comparatively small trade made it impossible to operate on so close a margin as its larger competitors. Nearby Redcrest, Pepperwood, and Scotia now supply Holmes' marketing wants, for a number of Holmes people are employed in these communities—especially Scotia.

HOW HOLMES STARTED

As Humboldt communities go, Holmes is comparatively recent. Its present population is about 150, while another 50 people live across the river in Larabee valley.

Senior citizen — everyone tells you — is Charles Gragg, who lives in a comfortable home atop a knoll somewhat removed from the town, surrounded by a 140-acre ranch which he has owned since 1907. Mr. Gragg is an agreeable and hospitable gentleman, who came from Finland in 1900 to make his stake in America as quickly as possible — and hurry home to claim his bride and "settle down."

"But after I had been in Humboldt and Mendocino for a couple of years, I changed my mind," he recounts with a twinkle in his eyes. "So I made a quick trip home, got married, and came back here. And I've never set my foot in Europe again — for which I am thankful.

"In fact, my first winter in Northern California was enough. Back in Finland, they were backing snows ten feet deep . . . here, it was green and cool like our springtime. I could hardly believe it — and I don't think my wife quite believed me until she came here and saw for herself!" Gragg first homesteaded at Bull Creek in 1906.

Holmes got its name from Joe Holmes, president of Holmes-Eureka Lumber company, and father of Fred Holmes, present head of that company, you are told. Holmes-Eureka first started logging in this area in 1906 where the present Holmes schoolhouse now stands.

They built a summer bridge across Eel river to connect with the railroad, and hauled their logs by train into Eureka. Thus the town first got its start as a logging camp, and "just grew" as its fine soil and climate attracted people. Logging came to an end in 1910 for Holmes-Eureka, Gragg says. But during that five year period, the bridge across Eel river had to be replaced four times — so heavy were the winter floods of that time.

The Pacific Lumber company also logged near Holmes, starting in 1910, and used the Holmes-Eureka railroad tracks and bridge. Their camp was known as P. L. Number 3. One tree was cut down near the Gragg ranch that scaled 130,000 feet, and took 16 forty-foot railroad cars to haul it away. Even then there was enough left to make 19 cords of shingle bolt material, Gragg says. And the stump that remains to this day measures from 18 to 21 feet in diameter!

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

Charles Gragg's history embodies much of the story of Holmes. He was a road foreman for Humboldt county from 1905 to 1915, and thereafter farmed and raised truck produce for many years. He still has some of the county's finest Gravenstein apples, and was once known as the community's tomato king. At that time, he was in partnership with Bryant Sappingfield, who had started the truck garden era in Holmes with his expert work and knowledge.

There is still some bit of truck farming done in Holmes, you are told — with tomatoes, potatoes, beans, peas, and strawberries leading the list. Most of the orchards are past full-bearing now, and some of them are being taken out.

Gragg also teamed at one time, and had six big horses with which he made split wood hauls, and did **contract work on roads. He and** his wife have six children —five daughters and one son, Oscar, who is a foreman for Mercer-Fraser company, of Eureka.

Old time names? — Charles smiles in recollection. "Yes, I recall quite a few," he says, "but I probably have forgotten some of them. There was Sam Aldrich, who bought his land from Joe Holmes, and whose children still live here. 'Most everybody came into here after 1906 and bought their land from the lumber company.

"I remember R. O. Dunning, Robert Carey, the Bradbury and Woolridge families — and the two Danes, Lou Hansen and Scotty Nelsen. Then there were a couple of Italian fellows — Carl Dilero and Arthur Cetara, who came here when the place started. And there was William Millsap, whose family is now in Pepperwood; Matt Matson, Vic and Don Rebeck, Pete Bianchi, Bill Anderson, Dick Harding, B. W. Miller. . . .

"Three of us — John Hoffman, my own brother John, and myself—all bought our ranches here the same day from the same man —Frank Osterland, who originally homesteaded in what is now Holmes.

"About the earliest settler here was the Happy Camp shingle bolt company that started around 1890, I guess. It was run by Mike Johnson, whose nickname was 'Russian Mike.' They floated their bolts down Eel river to Scotia, but lost a lot of stuff because of sinkers that wouldn't float. They shut down finally, and no more was done here until Holmes-Eureka took over in 1905."

Holmes had a company-run store in its logging heyday, Gragg tells you. It also had a couple shingle and split materials mills, the first of which was run by John Helms, and a later one by Ed Ogle. Neither the mills nor the store have been in existence for many years.

THE HOLMES SCHOOL

In a commodious, well-kept building set back from the road, Holmes' younger generation attend school. There are approximately 60 pupils, for the school serves the Redcrest-Englewood area, as well as Holmes. As this is written, school is just finishing for the summer, and the youngsters are enjoying the season's first taste of freedom from studies. Eel river is getting a good workout and you see coveys of them up and down the streets in swim suits.

Teachers at Holmes are Mrs. Emily Pond, and Miss Severine Ambrosini; while members of the school board are Dorothy Curless, Mrs. Bruce Lewis, and Ed Lewis.

Holmes' first school was a temporary structure erected in 1907, which was followed by the present building in 1908. Charles Gragg was one of the first school trustees, and he enjoyed recounting how the Holmes school got its fine large bell.

"It seems they had two school bells delivered at Fort Kenyon, but could only use one of them," he says. "They cost $90 apiece, but we were offered the other one for $45 if we came and got it. So Ben Harris and I took a team, went over there and got it, and set it up where you see it now. That was our 'bargain bell'."

MORE ABOUT HOLMES

One of the best dairies in Humboldt is owned by the long-established Miller family, in Holmes. It had a large herd of both Guernsey and Jersey cows, and presents an impressive appearance with its modern equipment and new additions fronting on the town's thoroughfare. The Miller home adjoins the farm, and does its share in making the street attractive, with its well kept grounds.

The Holmes Grange was first started in 1933 with a former Holmes-Eureka cook house for its headquarters. It now has a large new building which is the center of community activity. Charles Gragg was chairman of the board for several years, and was one of the original group who got the grange started.

The famed Bryan's hole in Eel river at Holmes was named after John Bryan, father of Rae Bryan of Eureka, who at one time ran a resort on the opposite, or "railroad" side of the river, when the tracks only went as far as Shively, a few miles downstream. Bryan's Rest, as it was called, attracted sports fishermen from far and wide even in that day. Now, when fishermen can drive almost to it by automobile, it enjoys greater popularity than ever, for it is one of the river's prime fishing naturals.

That the Indians once knew the Holmes area well is attested by Mrs. Sam Stockton, who says that corn pounders and bowls are still found along Eel river when the water is low. A native of Holmes, and descended from the pioneer Thompson family, Mrs. Stockton runs a beauty parlor in a wing of the newly built Stockton home. She and her hus-

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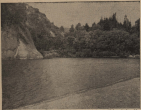
School's out! Holmes kids pause for picture on way to river.

Foreman George Buckness, of Pacific Lumber company's Larabee Ranch, has a way with horses. These came from the range to get a snack.

Part of the Larabee Ranch's well-kept buildings.

The summer bridge across Eel river from Holmes to Larabee valley is a stoutly-built affair.

Holmes and Larabee--Live and Let Live


One of Eel river's best fishing places—the famed Bryan hole near Holmes harbors big ones the year 'round. It is some thirty feet deep.

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band have collected quite a number of Indian relics and artifacts.

THE BIG P. L. RANCH

Let's go across Eel river to the Larabee valley side and have a look at the Pacific Lumber company's ranch. They are raising cattle and purebred horses on a 20,000 acre holding of cut-over land and, in the usual P. L. fashion, are doing a fine job of it. The cattle go to the company's commissary at Scotia, while the horses are becoming the nucleus of one of the country's best stables.

Stanwood Murphy, P. L. president, has a summer lodge in the ranch, located beside Larabee creek in a sylvan setting that is hard to equal.

Ranch manager is Dr. Barclay Ricks, of Scotia; while foreman is competent and long-experienced George Bucknell, who resides on the property.

They are running 1000 head of cattle — mostly Herefords — but the interesting angle to visitors is the horses. There are now about 35 head of what are known as "quarterhorses" on the ranch. These are a variety of racer that got its name from quarter-mile sprint racing at which they are unsurpassed, Bucknell tells you.

In Texas, he adds, they are called Steel-dust horses, but in California, the horsemen's associations decided on the name that identified them by their racing feats. The ranch also boasts of a purebred quarterhorse stallion — Buck Clayton, registry number 271 — that "Doc" Ricks alone has been able to ride.

Quarterhorses are one of Stan Murphy's favorites, you are told; and it is thanks to his efforts that many Humboldt people are now becoming interested owners of these fine animals. And when you see these trim-cut and beautiful pacers trotting about in the ranch's paddock-fields — and some mares with the cutest of colts that can run like scared deer — you can well understand why people learn to love them.

Notable is the fact that — although these horses run wherever they want on the range — they will readily approach foreman George Bucknell and eat out of his hand! It takes kind treatment, plus a lot of know-how on the part of everyone on the ranch, to achieve that unusual feat.

Next door to the Bucknell home is the quaint-appearing little Georgeson school that serves the Larabee ranch and environs. Nine pupils attend there — it is out now for the summer — and the teacher is Mrs. Marian Sickles. Beside it runs a creek about it tower the forests and hills—while in front of it run the Northwestern Pacific railroad tracks, much to the delight of small boys' hearts! Could ever a school offer more?

You slow the car down for one last look as you leave this lovely valley and pleasant community. And you wonder again that anyone would choose to live in nerve-torn cities when there are places on earth like this. Here is true living, as versus competing for mere existence — and they must have achieved peace of mind and the happiness that goes with it here . . . it even shows in the way the horses act!

Giant Sequoia Park Pushed

SACRAMENTO, June 11. (P)—Governor Warren announced today he is pushing efforts to ac-