

# HISTORY CENTER

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

## Take Me Out to the Crowd



San Luis Football Team, ready to play in Santa Barbara in 1902

*By Madge Ditmas  
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In the nineties (*ed. note: 1890s*), as today, there was an Arroyo Grande football team. And ask the old-time sports if the Ketchum, Grieb and Phoenix brothers, Lee Parsons and all the rest of the team could not keep a crowd interested in their plays.

Often after a hard-played game the local team gave a feed and dance to the visiting aggregation. I can remember one such dance, given to the Paso Robles football boys, when they danced until 2 o'clock. Before the dance the local team had treated the Paso Roblans to a tamale supper at Lewis' - this was a store and

candy kitchen in the building now occupied by The Novelty (*ed. note: on Branch Street*), where all the young folks went to eat at midnight on dance nights. Now, boys, you know the old fellows had more pep than you have, for none of you fellows of today could work hard all week plowing, or at some other ranch work, play football all afternoon, then dance - not walk - to music until 2 G.H. (go home).

Arroyo Grande also had a baseball team to advertise the valley. The star of the team was Lee Parsons, as catcher, and when he was home from Stanford, George Beckett pitched for his home team. And with this combination the Arroyo team was always the winner. George died one spring day while at college, and his funeral cortege was one of



The baseball team of the União Portuguesa do Estado da California (UPEC, Portuguese Union of the State of California). 42 refers to the number of the San Luis Obispo chapter. c. 1950s

the longest that ever wended its way to the local cemetery. Henry and George Clevenger, Edgar Gibson, Fred and Charley Phoenix also were members of the team



SLO High football practice, 1930

In those days of the gay nineties, even the Huasna had a baseball team, called the Huasna Cowboys. The players were Charley and Billy Lane, George and Lewis Kyte, George and Walter Lathrop, Charley Phoenix of the William Phoenix family of Phoenix Canyon, Archie Harloe, Cecil Ditmas and Dennis Wilkinson, who was the captain of the team.

The boys all lived miles apart, so could meet but once a week to practice, and seldom could the entire team practice together because of ranch work that must be done. So it was seldom that the Huasna Cowboys won a game. Of that Huasna Team, only Billy Lane, Walter Lathrop and Cecil Ditmas are here, as all the others have crossed the Great Divide where, Sir Conan Doyle used to say, they play ball and cricket if that will make them happy.

Arroyo Grande's first high school was sponsored and worked for by D. F. Newsom, L. C. Routzahn, J. F. Beckett and others, and school was "kept" in the Good Samaritan Hall (city hall now). A. F. Parsons was the first teacher, and some of the first students were Charley and George Runyon, Archie Beckett, George Clevenger, Alice Gambert, Maude Barnett, Addie Gibson, Edna and Clara Conrad and Maude Whiteley.

There was more or less "fussing" over the raising of taxes for the new high school because in the nineties times were really hard. There had been a series of semi-dry years, when the ranchers had only half crops and many of their cattle and other stock had died, for there was no railroad to haul in feed, and California was not an irrigated empire as it is today.

Many of the large landowners had their children in city schools or in private schools; some did not have any children, and all feared the increase in taxes, as the state did not give the ample help that is now given to schools from state funds, as the sale of public lands were supposed, by those in control of the state government, to be help enough for county schools.

So there was much bitterness amongst the folks of the valley, and the supervisor was argued at, talked to, advised for and



Young ladies playing tennis in 1908.

against, pleaded with, coaxed and cussed until he avoided everyone he saw coming his way. But like everything that is of real benefit to the human race, the little high school kept right on improving.

Anyway, local option came up to divide the valley folks, and in the intense bitterness of "saloons or no saloons," the high school fuss was forgotten. Arroyo Grande was the first village in the county to vote out the saloons, and there never was an attempt by the saloon owners to run blind pigs. They simply closed their doors and went out of business.

*Madge Ditmas started her varied career as the postmaster of the Musick Post Office until its closure in 1921. She would later become a noted local historian and volunteer with the*

We at the History Center were saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Louis Tedone, the first pediatrician in our county. Our deepest condolences to his family and friends.

You can read more about Dr. Tedone's remarkable life [here](#).

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Thomas Kessler  
Executive Director

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