

Do You Remember?

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ANSPACHER BROTHERS

Abram Anspacher emigrated from Bavaria in 1839 at the age of 21. He came to San Francisco in 1868 after a successful business career in the Midwest. Founder of Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco, he gave generously to so many Jewish charities that he garnered the sobriquet "Old Man Benevolent." Abram married Babette Rothschild and the couple had three daughters and three sons: Addie, Emma, Hannah, Philip, Simon, and Joseph. In November 1872 Abram bought property at the northwest corner of L and First Streets in Livermore for \$2,200. His sons opened the Anspacher Brothers store in January 1873. Abram never resided in Livermore, but he acted as his sons' buyer in San Francisco and visited frequently in the early days of the business. In his 1907 obituary, the *Herald* noted, "He

was held in great respect by all the old settlers who knew him and they will learn of his passing with sincere regret."

Anspacher Brothers operated a "lofty" wood frame store, 120 by 40 feet, which carried dry goods, clothes, gentlemen's furnishings, groceries, hardware, and farm machinery. In addition, they were dealers in hay, grain, and lumber; their large warehouses were located conveniently near the railroad tracks north of the store. By May 1876 they owned an entire block in downtown Livermore stretching from L to M Street and bordered by the railroad tracks and First Street, the same area more recently owned by Groth Brothers.

A 1907 *Herald* article, entitled "Livermore Business Houses," noted, "From a small beginning the firm of Anspacher

Bros. has grown to vast proportions and they employ a large force of clerks and their warehouse and store is the trading commercial factor in the Livermore Valley. The firm is progressive from the word go and much of the prosperity of our town and valley is due to their energy, enterprise and liberality."

Like most of the merchants in Livermore, they accepted cash but also traded merchandise for local butter, eggs, and chickens. Alice Anspacher Myers remembered, "We gave credit and we took mortgages on a farm, but it was the honor of the family never to foreclose but to carry these men and people until they could really make good. I think by and large it was not only our policy but it was our successful policy. I am very happy to believe

Good Prices
PAID FOR
Good Eggs



AT
ANSPACHER BROS.

1910 ad in Livermore Herald.

that nobody ever suffered through our foreclosing on any mortgage."

Abram's son Philip and his wife Bertha lived in Livermore with their daughter, Alice, from 1888 until 1893 in the large brown shingled house at the northwest corner of South L Street and College Avenue. Although Alice was only five years old when they left, she had indelible memories of the store even at age 61: "It had a big sign on it, Anspacher Brothers. . . the store was divided in half. One side was the dry goods side of it. The other was the place where groceries and farmers' implements and seeds were kept. Behind, at the end of the store, was the office. As a

child I took great delight naturally in the food end of it. I haven't changed very much, I can hear everybody say. But I can remember distinctly being allowed to go behind the counter. They would open those bins for me, large bins, and I could plunge my hand into the prunes or the dried apricots or the dried pears, anything that was edible.

"The lovely smell of coffee permeated the store, and I was intrigued too by the many rakes and shovels and scythes. . . One section of the dry goods part was particularly intriguing to me. Along the cosmetic counter they had beautiful colored soaps, three in a box, and the cakes were quite fat as I remember. There was also a counter where there was a lot of letter paper. I can still see that letter paper. It was blue and it was pink and it was rather heavy and double, creased in the middle, so that there were four sides on which to write."

Alice's memories of the store were taped in 1948 and later transcribed by her daughter. She also remembered that a large hall running the length of the store was on the second floor. The Anspachers hosted dances for their employees here. Her friend, Amy Sellers,

lived behind the store (Mr. Sellers was the manager). Alice and Amy would take white candles up to the hall and shave pieces of wax onto the floor. "Then we were allowed to slide along the huge floor to make it nice and smooth so that when the dances took place everyone would have a good time and not stick to the floor. It was great fun."

Carolyn Anspacher was the granddaughter of Philip Anspacher. She recalled her years in Livermore in an interview for the Judah Magnes Museum in 1979. "I think we were the only Jews in Livermore but we had no Jewish raising. I remember the big Christmas parties at Livermore that my parents had. Practically everybody in town was there. Our Christmas trees were maybe 20 feet high."

By December 1914 the Anspachers had closed the store and sold out its stock to W.H. Taylor; they sold their lumber business to local investors Louis Altmarino, Charles M. Nissen, and E.A. Wentz in 1916. However, they kept the Livermore warehouses and bought hay and grain during the harvest seasons, possibly until the death of Simon's son, Philip B. Anspacher, in 1925.

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