

In 1902 Harry Winegar, partner in the Livermore Commercial Company, purchased four acres along the north side of Fourth Street, extending from Holmes to R Street. On the western edge he laid out a baseball diamond and planted shade trees. Six years later, he commissioned a two-story concrete house for his family that still remains at 1342 Fourth Street. In the same year he had an enclosed swimming tank (sometimes called a "plunge"), 30 x 70 feet, built to the west side of the house. The tank was surrounded by dressing rooms except for the west end, where there was an office and seats for spectators. The 10,000-gallon pool was in use from 1908 until about 1924. When the Chamber of Commerce decided to persuade the Oakland Oaks to have their spring training in Livermore, Winegar's fine ball park and the swimming accommodations probably weighed heavily in Livermore's favor.

At first the minor baseball league in California was called the California League, but in 1903 the Seattle Indians and the Portland Beavers joined the California teams. The resulting new league was named the Pacific Coast [Minor] League. The California teams were the San Francisco Seals, the Oakland Oaks, and the Los Angeles Angels. Another team, the Sacramento Senators, moved to Tacoma, Washington in 1903 and later moved down to Venice; they

renamed themselves the Tigers.

In March 1912 and 1913 the city of Livermore hosted spring training headquarters for the Oaks, the Oakland baseball team in the Coast League. For rainy days the Oaks were offered the first floor of the Sweeney Opera House, which included a basketball court, handball court, and gymnasium apparatus. The opera house was at the corner of First and McLeod Streets. In order to accommodate the 36-member team, the players stayed in two two-story frame Livermore hotels—Malley's Hotel on the southeast corner of First and L Streets, where the Donut Wheel is now, and the Valley Hotel across the street on the southwest corner. The *Sporting Life* newspaper commented, "It will probably be necessary to divide the players between two hotels, which, however, are so close together as to make it virtually one home for the men."

The Oaks' manager and first baseman, Bud Sharpe, visited Livermore in early February

## Do You Remember?

By Anne Homan



### Livermore and the Pacific Coast League Baseball Team

to check out the accommodations. He especially liked the Livermore soil, which dried out rapidly after rain showers. "Conditions in Livermore are ideal for a spring training camp," Sharpe said, "The people of the town have extended themselves to provide every necessity. The boys will work out every day with the Livermore nine and will take to the armory [opera house] in wet weather. Give us good weather and we will be ready for the tap of the gong. The boys will have to do some lively work to get back their wind and take the springs out of their joints." The *Herald* noted, "Manager Sharp is well pleased with the diamond and ... especially with the showers and the plunge," which are generally not found in most country towns.

The team arrived in early March, and during the four weeks of training played games with the Livermore nine in Livermore and then rode the train into Oakland to play exhibition games there. The Livermore team was

managed in 1912 by Mirkovich and consisted of Chas. Hust, catcher; Frank Yates, pitcher; Ervin Waggoner, first base; Willard Barber and Ed Schutte, second base; M. McDonough, shortstop; Thos. Ebarando, third base; Jos. Callaghan, left field; Arthur Holm, center field; Frank Hubbel, right field.

In 1912 two excursion trains came from Oakland to watch the Oaks play the Livermore nine. The first train, a Southern Pacific, brought 250 fans; the second, a Western Pacific, 350. Sharpe loaned three of his players to the Livermore team each time to keep the competition even. Admission to the games was 25 cents for adults and ten cents for children. Sports writer Bert Lowry of the *Oakland Tribune* said of the first exhibition game in Livermore: "There was enough pepper and vinegar at the workout to give him [Sharpe] a line on how the boys will behave." After the second game, he noted, "Sharpe's men went in to show the fans that they are going to be some pump-

kins when the real grind and fight for the pennant begins." Manager Sharpe and his Oaks won the Pacific Coast League pennant in 1912. Livermore rejoiced with them.

Because of a continuing problem with malaria, Sharp retired, and his replacement for 1913 was Carl Mitze. The new manager asked for some changes to the ballgrounds. Winegar built a 14 x 26 enclosed room for the trainer's use and put benches all around the room for the players. A high window the full length of the room on the side toward the swimming tank gave light and ventilation. The shower baths were enclosed. These changes were to ensure that the players would be warm, even in a spring cold spell. Mitze also changed the schedule to six weeks of training.

All members of the team were married, and their wives accompanied them to Livermore. In 1913, most of the team and their wives stayed at the Valley Hotel, but everyone had meals at Malley's. Livermore catcher Charles Hust was signed by the Oaks for the season. The spring training of 1913 went well, but the Oaks did not win the season. In 1914 and 1915 they held spring training in Pleasanton. Harry Winegar changed the baseball diamond into a chicken farm.

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