

## A LINK TO OUR PAST-CSS IN THE 1930's

By 1930, Commodore Sloat had been open for 8 years and the work of the Mother's Club, sometimes referred to as the PTA, continued in supporting the school. The stock market crash on October 29, 1929, "Black Tuesday", plunged the country into the Great Depression. I found some items of historical interest in reading the minutes of meetings held long ago.

1930-31 – The PTA worked to have a West Portal library branch built. CSS adopted Ethan Allen School for "incorrigible boys". It was a tradition each year for the executive board to visit and "each member takes a pan of gingerbread (which must be frosted) and the boys have this special treat for lunch."

Speakers and topics for the PTA included: "Does the modern child need modern parents?", and "Mrs. A.B. Spreckles on the Palace of Fine Arts and a plea to help the Salvage Shop at 1244 Sutter St. to aid the unemployed". This is a reference to Mrs. Adolph Bernard Spreckles, aka Alma Spreckles, the San Francisco socialite, philanthropist, and patron of the arts, who was married to Adolph Spreckles, the heir to the Spreckles sugar fortune. She was the model for the figure on top of the monument in Union Square, she also founded the California Palace of the Legion of Honor and the Maritime Museum. During the depression Alma created "salvage shops" to help people suffering in the depressed economy, which were later given over to the Salvation Army to run.

March 1931, Arbor Day, "a tree was dedicated to Miss Berard in loving appreciation of her many years of service to our children". "A cylinder, containing the names of all Past Presidents of CS PTA, of the Executive Board, the teachers, and all children now enrolled signed in their own handwriting, was placed under the plaque."

1931-32 – It was a "difficult period as our school became an elementary when the new Aptos Jr. High was established in our immediate neighborhood". Former board members were given loans of \$20-\$30. "A down payment was made on some furniture to help keep one home together". Topics for speakers for PTA gatherings included "Mother, the home executive."

1932-33- The country remained in the grip of the depression. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president and construction on the Golden Gate Bridge began in 1932. The unemployment rate in 1933 was 25%. "Despite the financial and in some instances, physical distress of the time, we find ourselves with heads up and a considerably brighter mental outlook", state notes from the Mother's Club. A clothing depot maintained by CSS supplied shoes, clothing, and blankets to many poor families.

At Christmas time, a toy drive was held, "many wooden toys and games were designed, made, and painted" by CSS classes. Stockings were filled with candy, fruit and nuts for Red Cross distribution. "The tree which was planted in honor of our beloved principal, Miss Berard, was again decorated at Christmastime in orange and white lights, and received a ribbon award for shedding its beams on an otherwise dark and gloomy season." Orange and white were the school colors, decorating the Christmas tree in these colors was an annual tradition. "Throughout this strenuous period of depression, under the watchful interest and care of Miss Berard, no child has gone unfed; ragged and torn shoes have been repaired; clothing and blankets have been distributed to those in need."

“The school budget has been curtailed”, CSS could not get funds from the Board of Education, so playground equipment was purchased by the PTA.

“We are proud to exhibit our library”, where “a love of reading is instilled.”

Mr. Ching Wah Lee gave “a delightful talk, ‘A story of Chinese Culture’.”

“Chief of Police Quinn gave us a talk on the menace of communism.”

1934-35 – “We are proud that in spite of rising food prices, the children of CSS have been assured of the best food which the market affords.”

1939-40 – The goal of the Mother’s Club was “Improved environment and broader educational opportunities.”

The Moving Picture chairperson sent out a list each month of moving pictures being shown in neighborhood theaters, giving ratings to them: Family, Mature Family or Adult picture. She sought the cooperation of theater managers to have more appropriate children’s matinee programming, “omitting the hair-raising serial type of picture and adult pictures, and substituting pictures more in keeping for a children’s matinee.” The Empire Theater on West Portal was the only one that was receptive, and was “featuring Saturday afternoon programs of a caliber that could be rightly called Children’s Matinee”.

The Education chair compiled a list of desirable children’s radio programs.

The cafeteria “now serves a plate lunch, at the same time serving individual courses, as in the past”.

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