

## Way We Were

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Just Like Old Times

*“Yearly gatherings are a means of escape -- a time when we (can)... just be ourselves, as we used to be when we meandered down Main Street”* Park Record, July 18, 1930

As explained in last week’s article, former Parkites residing in California and Washington state started and held annual picnic reunions in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle. The Los Angeles gathering was a tradition upheld for nearly 60 years.

The picnic associations that managed these were formally structured, with elected officers (president, secretary, treasurer) and members who paid dues to cover costs of ice cream and coffee served at the picnic (other food and beverage was BYO or potluck), and invitation printing and mailing. During the Depression, the Southern California Association remarked “If you are out of work and hard up forget about the (dues).” There was playful competition between the two California associations to get attendees who were not immediately local, with Southern California promoting sunshine, studio crashing and peach picking and Northern California using, in the 1930s, the under-construction Golden Gate Bridge and Bay Bridge as draws.

During the peak years of the reunions, Parkites would come from great distances to attend. There was great disappointment when old friends were absent and often telegrams or letters of greeting were sent by those who could not make it. Among those in attendance, photographs and stories of old times were shared. To maintain the ties to their hometown, the secretaries of the picnic associations would send detailed write ups to The Record including picnic highlights, a list of attendees, and the association’s financial condition, as well as photos from the picnics.

On an interesting side note, World War II had an impact on participation in the picnics. Not only were younger members away on active military duty but also some older members were employed in the war effort at companies building ships and aircraft and were unable to get time off, even over a weekend. Also, due to rationing, those who lived farther away could not afford the gas to drive to the picnics. In one instance, a family saved its ration coupons to be able to provide the coffee and ice cream that were standard fare in non-war years.

While all picnic attendees were important to each other and many participated year after year, some individuals are noteworthy. In 1946, Christine Nelson Hurley was identified as the oldest member of the Northern California association; she was born in 1859 and attended until her death in April 1949. In Southern California, Gideon Snyder “the dean of Park City old-timers” joined in the picnics regularly from 1922 to 1949, passing away in early 1950; he had arrived in Park City in 1874 at age 7. W.A. “Bill” Raddon (former co-owner of The Record and brother to Sam “Dad” Raddon) attended the Southern California picnics from 1925 to 1971; he was born in 1870 and died in May 1972.

*The Park City Historical Society & Museum is celebrating 30 years of preserving, protecting, and promoting Park City’s history and heritage.*



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Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum, Himes-Buck Digital Collection

Caption: Bill Raddon (98 years old) and Bill Horan at the Park City Southern California Picnic on August 10, 1970.