



CITY OF BRISBANE

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November, 1996

Dear Reader:

This book, "A Spirit of Independence", was originally published in 1986 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the incorporation of Brisbane as a city. In the 10 years since its publication, response to this book, and demand for copies, far exceeded expectations and the original printing has been sold out for some time.

As part of this year's 35th anniversary celebration, the City has reprinted this book so that more people will be able to learn about our unique heritage and experience what Brisbane was like in the early years. As our community grows and changes it becomes more and more important that we maintain the links to our culture and our past. This is why, as part of the celebration of the 35th anniversary of the City's incorporation, we are focusing on a theme of preserving our historical and cultural heritage.

For myself and on behalf of the City Council, I would like to express my appreciation to those who contributed to the making of this book. Because they cared enough to share their experiences and preserve this history, we are able to look back into the world in which they lived.

I hope that you enjoy this book and appreciate its spirit as much as I do.

Sincerely,

Steven W. Waldo
Mayor



CITY OF BRISBANE

44 Visitacion Avenue
Brisbane, California 94005
(415) 467-1515

November, 1986

Dear Reader:

This book is called "Spirit of Independence." It is being published as part of our 25th anniversary celebration which marks the 1961 incorporation of Brisbane as a city. However, Brisbane as a community started much, much before that. This book chronicles the recollections of our earliest residents beginning shortly after the 1906 earthquake and during the depression when lots sold for \$5.00 down and open land was all around us.

The recollections and anecdotes of our early pioneers recreate for us the feeling of that bygone era. Their struggles and dreams are kept alive for us in this book. Because of the generosity of the "old timers" in sharing their remembrances and stories about Brisbane, we can now share in their "spirit of independence." I would like to thank them for myself and on behalf of the City Council for their commitment to our town.

While this is a collaborative community effort, I would like to especially commend our city librarian, Dolores Gomez, and our city historian, Dorothy Radoff, in appreciation of their leadership and their help, not only with this book but with their ongoing efforts in preserving the history of Brisbane. This book, the tapes and transcriptions will become a part of the library's permanent collection and will provide an opportunity to retain and share our legacy with new residents and with our neighboring communities.

There is an old saying "You can't know where you're going if you don't know where you've been." As Brisbane prepares to face its future, I feel it is important that we continue to be aware of our roots as a community. In this way, we can keep sight of our vision of what Brisbane is and what it should be. It was for this reason that this volume was published.

I hope that you enjoy this book and share the sense of pride I feel in being your neighbor and your Mayor in Brisbane.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fred Smith".

Fred Smith
Mayor

City Council, 1986

Fred Smith, Mayor

Raymond C. Miller, Mayor Pro-Tem

Tony Attard

Lewis E. Graham

Jeannie Jones Hodge

A Spirit of Independence

A HISTORY OF BRISBANE BEFORE INCORPORATION

Written and Produced by
Oral History Associates, Inc.
Sausalito, California

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Beginnings: 1800-1920	1
	The Legacy	3
	Early Pioneers	4
II.	A Town Called Brisbane: 1920-1940	9
	Arthur Annis Comes to Town	11
	New Arrivals	13
	Hard Work and Helping Hands	18
	Growing Pains	23
III.	War and Development: 1940-1961	27
	Brisbane Goes to War	29
	A Second Wave	32
	The First "Western Days"	36
	Moving Towards Incorporation	40
	Incorporation	42

BEGINNINGS: 1800-1920

"Those early years were the best times of my life. Our dairy hands used to go to their early morning chores singing. With glowing orange lanterns in their hands, they would soon disappear in the gray fog or mist."

--Tillie Mozzetti



Charles "Bud" Mozzetti

The Legacy

"Here they need not make bricks for houses..."

To discover the early history of Brisbane, one need look no further than the oyster shell mounds found along the canyons and ravines of its creeks. From those mounds, archaeologists have unearthed relics of the first inhabitants of the area: the Costanoan Indians.

It is believed that the Costanoans lived an idyllic life. As Dorothy Radoff, Brisbane's resident historian, has recorded, "Here they need not make bricks for houses. Their dome-shaped dwellings of boughs and tules kept them cozy and the San Bruno Mountains provided shelter from the fogs and winds of the west. Nor did they need to cultivate the land. Squaws gathered watercress in neighboring marshes, hills teemed with rabbits and deer, and a leisurely stroll on the shores of the Bay netted an abundance of shellfish."

For all its beauty and calm serenity, the Costanoan culture was doomed by the advance of European civilization. By 1776, the Spanish Conquistadors had arrived. The Franciscan missionaries soon followed leaving numerous large land grants in their wake.

For a time, the Costanoans coexisted with their missionary neighbors in peace. With the coming of Mexican rule, the lands controlled by the Mission were released to private enterprise.

It was time for a new group of people to come upon the land.

Grandeers and Gamblers

One of the new settlers was a man named Jacob Lesse. Lesse, who first came to California in 1833, took possession of the land grant entitled *Rancho Cañada de Guadalupe la Visitacion y Rodeo Viejo* in 1838, three years before he received the official title to the land. The grant covered 9,500 acres and included three separate valleys: *La Visitacion*, *Rodeo Viejo* and *Cañada de Guadalupe*, the valley which now contains the city of Brisbane.

Around the year 1843, Lesse traded his grant to Robert T. Ridley for the *Rancho Calloyami* in Sonoma. Ridley never lived on the property nor developed it to any extent. He did, however, manage to lose most of it in a lawsuit which involved a gambling debt. In the subsequent foreclosure proceedings, Charles Crocker purchased the bulk of the property, a little over 3,000 acres, for \$4,000.

"Legend has it..."

As the great landlords made their imprint on the history of Brisbane, another type of man was also making his mark. According to local legend, during the 1850s, Joaquin Murieta used the area as a refuge from the local police. Depicted by some as a notorious desperado and by others as California's Robin Hood, Murieta preyed upon the San Francisco to San Jose stage line from Costanos Canyon. Although Murieta was eventually hanged by the San Francisco Vigilante Committee, his fame lives on in the folklore and legend of the area.

In 1933, John Loheit, one of Brisbane's most poetic early settlers, gave the following description of Murieta's legacy: "Ofttimes when in a troubled state of mind I light my pipe and for an hour or two wander through the Brisbane woods above Highland Park.... Legend has it that these woods furnished a rendezvous for Joaquin Murieta. The great oak with its long horizontal bough still stands, on which tradition says he hanged his victims. Rumor has it that here somewhere he cached part of his ill-gotten gain. Who knows, but someday a wanderer here may unearth his private hoard...."

If Murieta's fortune remains hidden in the earth, other enterprising men were able to extract riches from the ground. In 1895, the Crocker Estate Company leased a section of Crocker's Visitacion Ranch to two men named Warren and Malley for the rights to exploit the quarry on its property. For use of the quarry, the Crocker Company was paid \$100 a month, plus "rock royalties." By the turn of the century, the quarry employed over 100 workers.

With its temperate climate and ideal location, the area could not for long be the exclusive property of quarry workers and ranch hands. By 1900, with frontier conditions fading across California, it was inevitable that people would attempt to settle in this pleasant site overlooking the buoyant waters of the Bay.

Early Pioneers

"They lost a lot of money in here..."

For thirty terror-filled seconds on the early morning of April 18, 1906, the San Andreas Fault shifted. Known to history as the San Francisco Earthquake, this tremor in the earth's crust caused enormous fires, devastated the city, and left over 250,000 people without homes.

In the wake of this calamity, land developers anticipated a great boom in the value of real estate. Soon, their eyes turned to the rich potential of the Guadalupe Valley. In 1908, the American Realty Company began terracing a semicircle to build homes for the earthquake victims. In doing so, they named their proposed subdivision the "City of Visitacion."

Seemingly, it was an idea whose time had come.

Unfortunately for the speculators, it was also an idea that far outstripped their resources. Their Utopian design included such amenities as a fire station, a school house, a city hall, a community center, and streetcar and railroad lines.

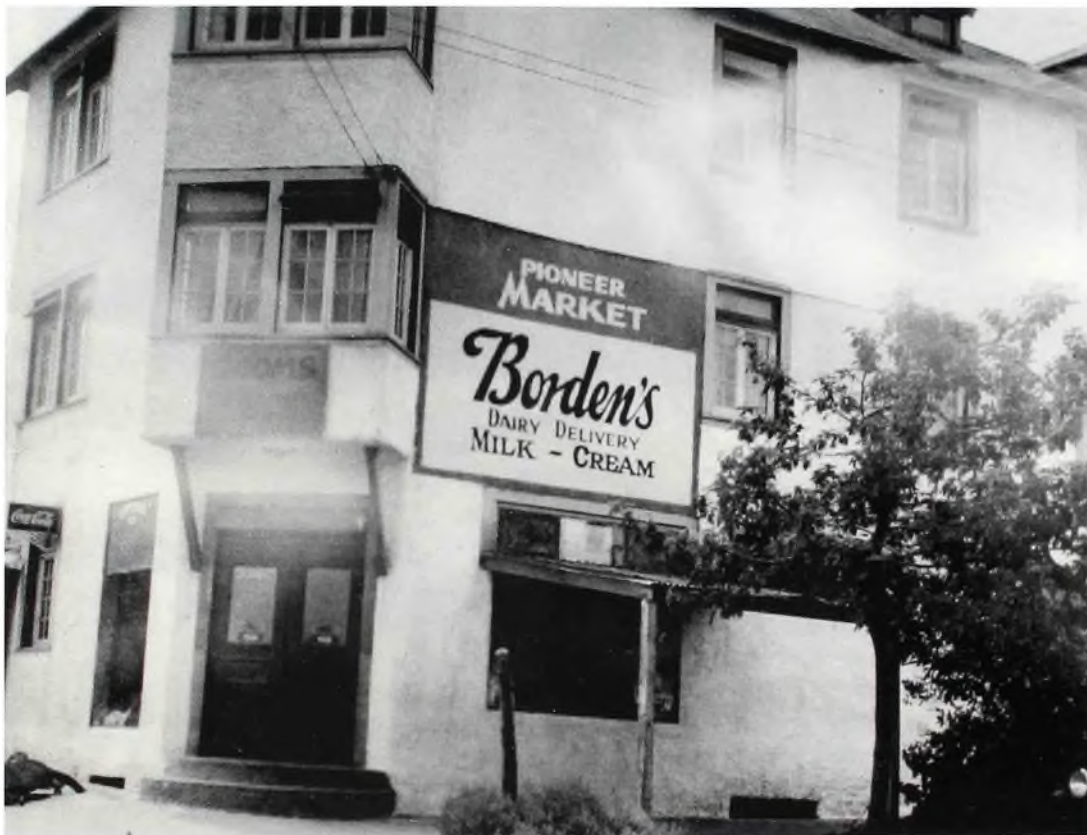
In reality, the city lacked the most basic necessities. The streets were little more than cow trails. In addition, the water lines, sewers, gas and electric lines only existed on the developers' blueprints. Finally, while the 25 by 100 foot lots were priced at \$1,300, similar lots elsewhere on the Peninsula sold for less than half the price.

"The developers lost a lot of money in here," recalls Delbert "Bud" Sweet, one of Brisbane's earliest residents. "One of them, I think, killed himself over it. They did a lot of grading and put in all the old rock gutters that were here. They even had plans for a streetcar line up San Bruno Avenue to connect with San Francisco. Those were the plans they had...but none of them ever matured."

"Nothing but wide open spaces and a mere five families..."

Despite the grandiose plans of the realtors, only a few homes were actually constructed. From those early pioneers, however, Brisbane can boast a number of its most prominent names.

Emile and Julie Allemand emigrated from their native France and purchased a lot and home on Inyo Street. Subsequently, they built the Brisbane Hotel, the community's first major structure. Still standing today, the hotel can be seen at the corner of Mariposa and San Bruno Avenue. Over the years, the hotel also served as the town's first grocery store, post office, general merchandise store, and hunting club.



The Allemand's hotel as it appeared in 1929

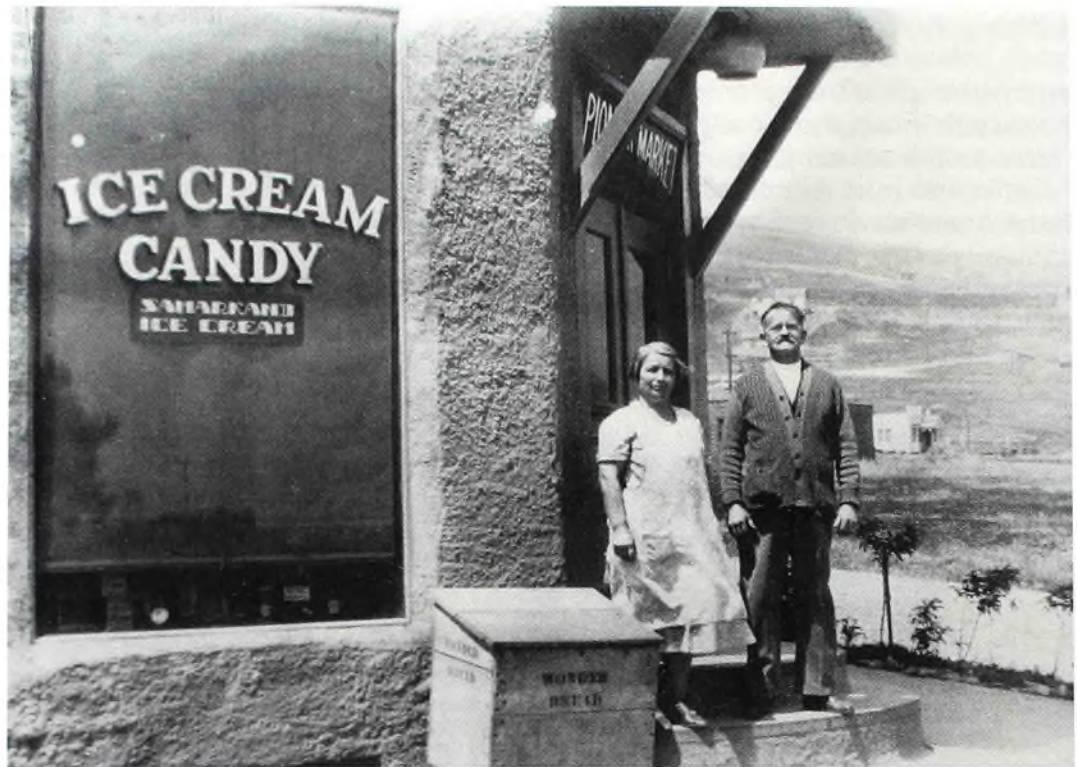
Soon after the arrival of the Allemands, Joseph and Charles Mozzetti established a large dairy and poultry ranch in the meadow below their home. In 1916, their brother Steve arrived from Northern Italy with his wife, Tillie, and their infant daughter, Lena.

"At that time," remembers Tillie Mozzetti, "there was nothing but wide open spaces and a mere five families living in town -- us, the Sweets, Naughtons, Allemands, and Duncan Washington."

Life was hard for Tillie Mozzetti and rivalled the trials and tribulations of the hardiest frontier wife. Tending to the needs of her husband and daughter was only a small part of her routine. In addition, she prepared all the meals for the 18 dairy hands who handled the cows and poultry, chopped firewood, carried water to the house in 10-gallon cans, cleaned the kerosene lamps, and washed and hung the clothes by hand.

Still, she recalls those days with fondness. "Those early years were the best times of my life. Our dairy hands used to go to their early morning chores singing. With glowing orange lanterns in their hands, they would soon disappear in the gray fog or mist."

*Emile and Julie
Allemand*



"Oh, it was country..."

Along with the Allemands and Mozzettis, other pioneering families put their mark upon the area. In 1912, the Sweets formed the Improvement Club, which later changed its name to the Social Club. In 1917, the Linde family arrived and began building their home at Number Four Solano Street.

At that time, only a few residents had any kind of piped water coming into their homes. Up in the hills overlooking the Bay, people were forced to carry water in 25-gallon containers. In response to this situation, Linde and his sons, Ted and Heine, brought in water equipment and dug trenches for pipelines to bring water to such early residents as the Fitzgeralds, O'Neils, and Staffords.

Despite having only 28 residents, the town of Visitacion was able to finance a number of community improvements during the 1920s. For the most part, life remained simple and rural. The valley continued to serve as grazing land. Hunters stalked the surrounding meadows for geese, wild turkeys, and rabbit.



City of Visitacion

Winnie Naughton Wilson is a member of one of those pioneering families. She remembers both the difficulties and pleasures of life in those days. "We were living in San Bruno at the time and my father wanted to get us a house to live where it was nice weather. I had an aunt who lived in South City and she said, 'Why don't you come on out to Visitacion?' So we moved out here with a horse and wagon, with furniture and everything.

"Oh, it was country. We used to have chickens and the roosters crowing. You only had a wood stove here and kerosene lamps or lanterns. There was no electricity. The roads were all clay roads. You'd come in with too heavy a car or truck, and you'd get stuck. Two or three times, some real estate guy was going to start selling, but there was no transportation here. You either had to have a horse or there was no way to get out here.

"In those days, we had to walk from Brisbane all the way up by the Cow Palace to go to a one-room school. My brother and sisters, and the Lindes, and Bud Sweet, and the Mozzettis' three children would all walk roughly two miles, maybe two and a half miles.

"Everything else was horse and buggy in those days. My mother used to go to South City shopping with a horse and buggy every other day with us kids in it. She had a surrey with a two-seat and we used to drive over to do our shopping.

"We used to get clams and mussels down by the Bay. We used to go swimming right here. Many a times I played hooky from school. It's a wonder I know what I know today. I used to take my brothers and we'd all go down and have our lunch and go swimming and boil up some clams. It was beautiful in those days. I loved it."

At this time, the Bay came up to the corner of Visitacion Mall and Old Country and was a popular swimming spot.



The 7-Mile House at the turn of the century

"Don't forget that we had bootlegging going on..."

If its out-of-the-way location gave Visitacion a certain rural charm in the days following the First World War, it also helped attract a new class of people to the area: bootleggers. Following the introduction of Prohibition in 1918, a number of San Francisco mobsters employed moonshiners to manufacture liquor in Costanos Canyon. As a result of these activities, the area soon became known as a center of speakeasies and gambling dens.

"Don't forget that we had bootlegging going on," relates Winnie Wilson. "After we moved out of a house down by the Brisbane Inn, some bootleggers got in. Us kids used to hickey them if we saw anyone coming. They used to dump their mash, like apricot mash, all over on the side there. They'd hide, but they finally caught them anyway."

John Wilson, Winnie's husband, was also aware of some of the slightly less-than-legal activities occurring in the area. "During Prohibition, we had these boats come in off the ocean and throw the stuff overboard and leave it, any way to get it in there," he remembers. "The bootleggers threw them off out in the ocean and let the stuff float in. They had guys laying there waiting for it."

As a resident of the area since 1915, Ted Linde recalls that Visitacion enjoyed quite a boom during the dry days of the 1920s. "Visitacion Valley was an extremely popular place for many people during the early days of Prohibition because of the many natural creeks and springs flowing through the property. Large crowds would gather at the Visitacion Ranch Creek to gather watercress and to sample and bottle the water. This delicious tasting water had an unusual whiskey-like kick to it due probably to the sour mash dumped down the creek from a number of illegal stills located back in the hills."

Despite this brief business boom, the people of the area were glad enough to see Prohibition go. In 1933, when the people of San Mateo County were asked to vote on repealing Prohibition, the tally came to 2,282 nays and 20,051 ayes. The era of moonshining and bootlegging had come to an end.

At the close of nearly three decades of land settlement, the still sparsely populated city of Visitacion had become home to many an immigrant. For some, the area was rich in financial opportunity. For others, it was a rural sanctuary to be protected. Finally, for a third, less savory population, the area afforded a chance to operate beyond the reach of the law.

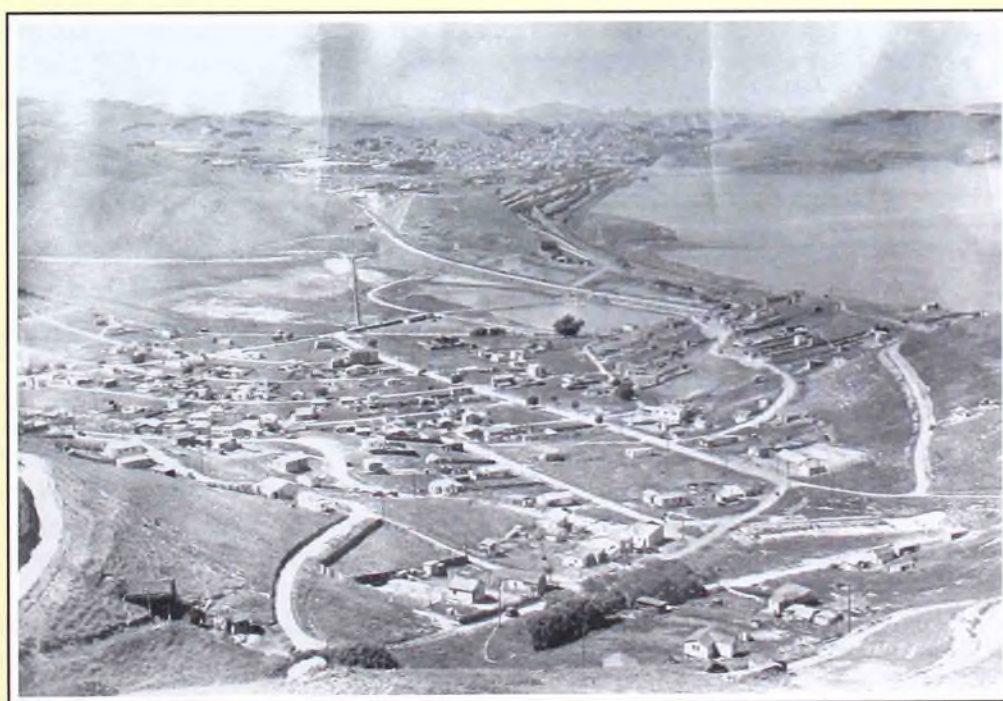
With the advent of the Great Depression, all three groups were to find themselves sorely tested.



The Zeitelmann home in Brisbane -- 1910

"I think my parents had what to me exemplifies the spirit of the people of Brisbane. They had a spirit of independence. During the height of the Depression, lots of people chose to remain in the cities and get in unemployment lines and sell those five-cent apples. It seemed to me that the people who came here were very poor, but they had this spirit of independence. They'd get these old boards or old tar paper, whatever, and put up these old shacks. They were only old shacks, you might say. But still it was your shack. It was your old tar paper. It was your old boards."

--Dorothy Radoff



Arthur Annis Comes to Town

"An idea so dominantly different and almost unbelievable..."

Although 1929 is usually associated with the catastrophic Wall Street Crash, this year had positive connotations for the people of Brisbane. For, in 1929, Arthur Annis came to town.

Annis is best remembered as a realtor who helped develop the area and as the man who gave Brisbane its name. But his real impact upon the community can only be described by the people who felt his influence directly.

In the March 3, 1934 issue of the *Brisbane Sun*, Arthur Gledhill, the founding editor of that paper, paid his tribute to Annis:

"Our beloved Brisbane, now a husky 5-year-old youngster, was not a 'happencance.' For twenty long years, known as Visitacion City, it lay dormant -- waiting for the opportunity to be of service to substantial home-loving people who could be happier if they could, with small means, be independent.

"Then in 1929, happily, Arthur Annis came along, popularly known as the 'Daddy' of Brisbane, and a really truly Santa Claus to Brisbane's pioneer children numbering 28 in 1929; steadily increasing to 230 in 1933 (which is but one example of what a good 'idea' will do)!

"Annis's idea was extremely simple -- to permit good citizens of small means to build their homes, without unreasonable restrictions, as soon as they contracted to purchase their lots...

"What an idea! What a basis for establishing a new community of virile people with similar aims and ambitions, paramount of which is independence. Many of Brisbane's pioneer residents built their own homes with their own hands and the help of neighbors -- representing the true community spirit which has prevailed ever since.

"Was this idea a success? Not immediately, because the idea was so dominantly different and almost unbelievable that it took another idea to bring it into full significance. Annis realized the handicap of the name 'Visitacion City' -- being so close to a San Francisco city district of similar name that people confused the two locations. Then one night an inspiration! 'Why not change the name?' Then 'What name?' Something easy to say, to remember, and entirely different from any other western city. Happy thought - Ah! - BRISBANE!"

"Here's the best news I have ever been permitted to pass on..."

More than 400 homes were built in the area between 1929 and 1933. This despite the advent of what the *Brisbane Sun* described as "four years of the worst depression the world has ever known." To entice people to continue building in the Brisbane area, Annis offered good land at prices that were too good to pass up. As an example, Annis penned the following advertising flyer in 1933:

"Here's the best news I have ever been permitted to pass on to my friends in Brisbane:

"At my insistence, the owner has given me written permission to dispose of all the remaining unsold lots in the Original Brisbane Subdivision at 'clean-up' prices..."

"These lots were low priced to begin with....They have been priced, and sold, at from \$150 to \$300.

"The new list, filed at the Bank, quotes them at the ridiculously low prices of \$50, \$75, and \$100!..."

The Brisbane Tract Office was originally built in 1908 and in 1929 it was used by Arthur Annis



In addition to the housing boom, Brisbane developed an increasing array of public services in the period between 1929 and 1933. The *Sun* boasted of the "most remarkable PERMANENT development California has ever known in such a short space of time." To prove its point, the paper listed the following accomplishments:

Post Office authorized in 1930

Public Free Library instituted in 1932

Public School opened in August 1930 (Primary to 5th grades)

Fire Department organized in 1933

Bus service to San Francisco and peninsula points, 1930

\$12,000,000 Bayshore Highway completed

Four miles of new roads

Water service increased - including four miles of new water mains

Natural gas service now being installed by P.G. & E.

'Brisbane Sun,' weekly neighborhood newspaper started 1933."

No discussion of Arthur Annis would be complete without asking the question: Why did he call the town Brisbane? According to Annis's daughter, he named it after the city in Australia. Others believe that he named the town in honor of the popular journalist Arthur Brisbane. Both theories are persuasive. Certainly, both theories have their ardent supporters. And perhaps both contain a certain measure of the truth.

Whatever the source of inspiration for the town name, the attraction of good land at modest prices made moving to Brisbane an attractive proposition during the height of the Depression. With lots selling for as low as \$50, it should have come as no surprise that more than 400 homes were built in the area between 1929 and 1933 -- "a building record unsurpassed," noted the *Brisbane Sun*, "by any other community in the United States, or any other part of the world."

New Arrivals

"There was a Depression going on..."

The onset of the Great Depression brought a number of new settlers to the Brisbane area. Drawn by the promise of a mild climate and cheap land, they came to forge a new life for themselves and for their children.

"There was a Depression going on," recalls Felix Schwenderlauf, who came to Brisbane in 1932. "Rents were so high in the city that we moved to Brisbane to get cheaper rent. I had a big family and I had to raise my kids. So I moved out here."

For many people like Felix Schwenderlauf, moving to Brisbane meant no longer having to rely on the mercy of the landlord for affordable housing. Remembers Bud Sweet, "During the Depression, a lot of people came out. There was no building laws. They'd just put up any kind of shack they wanted to live in. They did it to beat the landlord, that's all."

ANNOUNCEMENT!

To the Hundreds of Families Who Have Purchased and Hundreds More Wanting to Purchase But Waiting the News Regarding the School for Their Children—HERE IS THE NEWS—

BRISBANE SCHOOL WILL OPEN AUGUST 11th IN

BRISBANE

The Sunshine Suburb
only 15 minutes from Market St.



Brisbane temporary school

Plan Now for Your Future Country Home, Where You Can Build Your Own Home, With Your Own Hands—Bring Up Fine Healthy Children—Raise Chickens If You Wish.

52 LOTS AT EACH to Select From **\$100**
Terms \$5.00 Per Month

Some of these only 100 feet from

Sewer, Water, Electricity, etc.

ALL COMMAND A MAGNIFICENT VIEW.

MORE THAN 40 HOMES NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION. 50 MORE ALREADY COMPLETED. THERE ARE LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCH ACTIVITY



The first public school in Brisbane was here in Joe Mozzetti's basement

"My first memories of our city..."

Bernice Lummus Blanchard was among the first to respond to the opportunity of good land at low prices. "My first memories of our city go back to the spring of 1929 when my family drove from San Francisco to picnic in Brisbane," she relates. "At that time Brisbane was a handful of homes. There were dusty, narrow roads, chickens walking here and there, endless patches of wildflowers, cows nibbling grass, and birds adding to the beauty of the hills and trees with their songs.

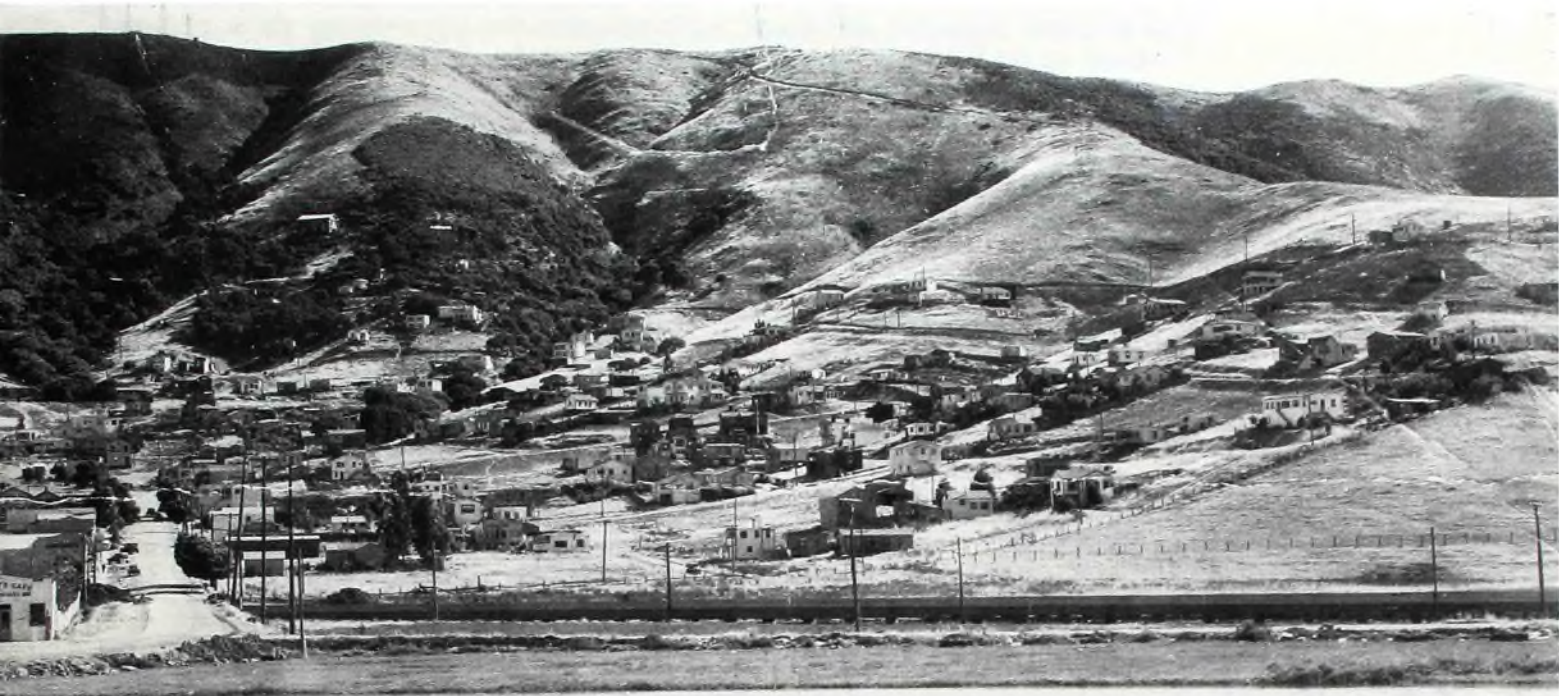
"By the summer of 1929, Mr. Annis and my folks had become good friends due to our weekly treks to Brisbane. He convinced us to buy and build in Brisbane. After all, \$300 for two lots on Mariposa Street wasn't too bad. By November 1, 1929, we had moved into our new home. It was the only home on our block for two years. We had to dig a cesspool since there were no sewers. We also bought a new wood stove to cook our food and heat our home. Our food was kept in a cooler. We didn't have an ice box or an ice man. As I look back, I realize how busy my mother was, keeping home. There was no telephone, no neighbors close by and no street lights. Our only entertainment was the radio.

"As time passed, the Depression became more threatening every day. Families sharing the same dire predicament as our own were moving into Brisbane. The quiet town, accustomed to the chickens, birds, and roosters each morning, now woke up to the sounds of hammering and wood saws as new homes were being built. That was the start of the exchange service in Brisbane. If one family had their home almost completed, they followed the sound of hammers and the saws to offer assistance. The men helped with the building and the ladies cooked the meals for the workers. Numerous staunch friendships and sturdy homes have weathered the test of time in Brisbane because of that exchange service..."



"...this spirit of independence..."

One of those families "sharing the same dire predicament" belonged to Dorothy Radoff. "I lived in San Francisco until 1932, when my parents and I came to Brisbane," she recalls. "That was during the height of the Depression. I think my

*Brisbane, 1935*

parents had what to me exemplifies the spirit of the people of Brisbane. I don't want to sound real corny here, but I've always thought they had a spirit of independence.

"During the Depression, lots of people chose to remain in cities and get in unemployment lines and sell those five-cent apples. It seemed to me that the people who came here were very poor, but they had this spirit of independence. They'd get these old boards or old tar paper, whatever, and put up these old shacks. They were old shacks, you might say. But still it was your shack. It was your old tar paper. It was your old boards.

"I think this is carried through today, this independence of the people here. That's probably why my parents came here. My dad was out of work and of course the monetary problem came into it, too. You could buy a lot for \$1 down and \$1 a week, or \$5 down, \$5 a month. I can remember when the real estate man, Mr. Billings, would come once a month to collect the \$5. There was many times when my parents just didn't have it. But nothing would happen. Who was going to come along and take our property back? Who could buy it? Nobody had any money anyway.

"I can remember what the town looked like when we first came. It didn't look too much different than it does today. That's because of this beautiful, natural setting. Of course, there were fewer houses and the streets were absolutely deplorable. You'd sink knee-deep into the mud when you went to the store.

"In those days, you'd hear the buzz of a saw or the hammer going. As most of the men weren't working, they'd go and help the person. It was, I guess, a lot like the pioneer days in this country. Everybody helped one another. There was this spirit of camaraderie.

"That's the thing I love about Brisbane. It hasn't changed that much. Where else can you go and say this? To me, that's progress. That's the meaning of progress..."

"...in the Depression, you didn't have nothing..."

Lorene Harris was also among the many immigrants who came to Brisbane seeking relief from the general misery of the times. "I was born in Texas, a little town

named Kemp," she recounts. "When the Depression came along, I left Texas. My husband had come out and found a job and was staying with my sister and her husband up on Sierra Point. When he got ready, he sent me the money to come out, because in the Depression, you didn't have nothing. I came out on a Greyhound bus. Oh, I thought I never would get here. It's a long distance, you know. I saw the South San Francisco industrial sign and I thought I was seeing San Francisco. Then the driver didn't want to let me off at Brisbane.

"I thought that was very strange. He said, 'Do you know anyone in this town?' I said, 'Yes, I do. My sister and her husband live in Brisbane.' He said, 'Well, then, I will let you off.'

"I had two heavy suitcases. Little did I know what was ahead of me. That bus pulled off and here I am. The main entrance to Brisbane comes straight in. No pavement. No sidewalk. And it was rainy season, and muddy. I carried those heavy suitcases all the way in. At that time, on the corner where the liquor store is now was an old, old building with a drugstore. I went in there and asked about my sister and her husband. There was this little red-headed boy in there on his bike, and he knew all about them so he took me up on the hill.

"That's how I arrived in Brisbane. It was no streets, no sidewalk, nothing. That was in 1934. So we started out, bought a lot up there on Sierra Point. Paid \$75 for it. We thought we were just flying..."



The Bayshore Highway as it looked in the '30s

"It reminded me of the little home I was born in in Germany..."

If Lorene Harris felt it was a long way from Kemp, Texas to Brisbane, Mary Arcotti must have felt like she was coming to a whole new world. After leaving her native Germany, she arrived in America and moved from place to place until she finally found a home in the small community by the Bay.

"I came to this country when I wasn't quite 20," she remembers. "My husband's half-brother lived in San Francisco. He found a job for my brother so we moved out there. I gave birth to two boys there -- one in '25 and the other in

'28. One boy had bronchitis so bad we used to take a ride down to Redwood City every Sunday to get away. On the way, we passed by Brisbane where it was always sunshine.

"So in 1930, we bought two lots here in Brisbane for \$150. Then my husband got a job with the WPA. If you worked one week, they gave you three weeks of groceries, but you had no money for anything else. Ever so often, though, my husband got a job and we would take that money and buy old second-hand lumber. So we built a home on Alvarado Street. It's still there. For a long time, we didn't have no roof. Before the winter came, we got the roof put on. But we had no sewer. It was a cesspool.

"At the time, Brisbane reminded me of the little home I was born in in Germany. You could go up on top of the mountains and see the city down below. There was nothing. Your neighbors were so far away.

"I couldn't talk English at the time. I had to learn. That's how I learned my English, by getting interested in the school. I did the cooking up there for seven years and I learned my English from the children. From there, I got interested in going to meetings, and then the first thing I knew, I was the hospitality chairman to serve the food. Then finally I got to be financial secretary. And then I was philanthropy chairman. That's where we got clothing for the children.

"Everyone was poor in town, but if someone did cast off their clothes, we made sure the children got them. And we got some money from the town for dental work. I couldn't have my own teeth fixed. I was poor too. When I was cooking up at the school, the government gave me powdered milk and, once in a while, butter. I would buy the crackers and the cocoa and I would serve 35 undernourished children in the morning. I would buy that out of my own pocket. And there were plenty of children who were hungry. Believe me.

"Fortunately, I am a good cook. That's why my children always said, 'Well, Mom, we've been poor but we always have had plenty to eat.' It may not have been steak, but I managed. I went and done housework for the drugstore. I got \$3.50 a week. My oldest son worked at the drugstore. He was 14 at the time. He got \$4 a week. We managed. We didn't ask for no welfare or nothing. I was taking in three or four laundries besides. When there's a will, there's a way."



A view of Brisbane in 1936. In the left foreground is the school annex and its main building is the building with the stairs

Hard Work and Helping Hands

"I've got a little story to tell about lots..."

It is almost impossible to place these stories of hard times and struggle in the proper context. Perhaps then, the following story from Jim Williams, a long-time Brisbane resident, puts the desperateness of the situation in the proper light. "I've got a little story to tell about lots. They used to give lots in Brisbane away down on Mission Street in the theaters on Bingo Night. A lot of people would turn them down because they couldn't pay the taxes on the lot. In 1932, '33, '34, you could go into a theater for 25-35 cents. But people wouldn't even take them as a prize because maybe the back taxes were \$75 or something like that and nobody could pay for it."

As a boy growing up in Brisbane during the '30s, John Gomez tells how people struggled to survive. "I remember when the freight cars carrying produce were right out here in front of the entrance to Brisbane. They used to carry fruits and vegetables. The cars would go over to the main part of the freight yards where they would be unloaded. Then what they would do is run them down like a side track or spur track, right in front of the entrance to Brisbane where the train depot used to be. There, they would clean the cars all out, the straw that was used to protect the fruit and everything. Well, maybe there was a watermelon in there. Perhaps it may have been cracked. The people of Brisbane would go down there and get those melons. They'd find fruit that may have been bruised or damaged. These were still lying in the straw. That's where people used to get their fruits and vegetables."

Despite the hard times, the people of Brisbane worked to make their town grow. Together, they provided education for their children, created a volunteer fire department to protect their property, formed social and religious organizations to improve the quality of life, and somehow managed to find time to entertain themselves.

There are many examples of this commitment to building a better life during the darkest times of the Depression. In 1930, the Improvement Club was organized and held its meetings in the basement of the Mozzetti home. Within two years, this organization changed its name to the Voters League. In response to the growing popularity of the automobile, Joseph and Charles Mozzetti began promoting their newly built South San Francisco Auto Court, located at the entrance to town. During this time, the Mozzettis also established a school in the basement of their home on Old Country Road.

1932 proved to be a busy year for many civic-minded residents of Brisbane. For example, the Parent Teachers Association was organized, with Mrs. L. W. Prestedge as president. In the same year, the first Girl Scout Troop was also formed and the Brisbane Social Club was created. 1932 also saw the creation of the Brisbane Volunteer Fire Department. The first chief of this unit was Beryl Coffin. Fred Schmidt later replaced him as the head of Brisbane's volunteer fire fighters.

In 1933, the Boy Scouts were organized in Brisbane. One year later, the Brisbane Merchants Association came into existence. George Heywood served as the first president of that group. Finally, in 1937, both the Catholic Church and the Community Baptist Church were founded. The Voters League was also succeeded by the Civic League.



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"...a very rural place..."

Finding educational facilities for all the children proved a difficult problem in the 1930s. As Fred Schmidt recalls, "In 1929, Brisbane was a very rural place. Some of the lower part of town had some houses in it. But mostly it was just one big open space.

"At first, we had a one-room schoolhouse. I went to grammar school there. But then there was an influx of people into the community to where there wasn't enough room to handle all the children who had to go there. So they were sent over to a larger school in Bayshore while a bigger school was being built in Brisbane.

"Remember that this was the time when we were in a depression period and money was scarce and people weren't working. To get the kids to go to school was a chore because some of the families didn't have the ability to send the children to school. So having a schoolhouse and having it close by was important."

The "bigger school" in Brisbane was ready by 1936. It consisted of four rooms and an auditorium. It also employed four teachers.



Old Brisbane School --1936

Dedication ceremony for the new Brisbane School --1936

*Building the Fire Hall
-- 1936*



"All the firemen got together on it..."

While the citizens of Brisbane struggled to educate their children, they were also dealing with the problem of protecting their property against fire. "In 1934, there were no fire hydrants, nothing for fire protection," remembers Felix Schwenderlauf. "So we had to rely on a volunteer fire department. We figured out a set of plans and started to build a firehouse. We got together enough money to start it. We had the lot and we had enough money to start getting lumber. All the firemen got together on it.

"We trained by burning grass and we had fire drills. We all got together, the chief and the officers, and we mapped out what the training was going to be and we trained in first aid and fires. We got most of our experience by putting out burning grass.

*The first Brisbane Fire
Department circa 1932*



"There was a fire bell out by the side of Hayward's Store. It was a big brass bell. If there was a fire, and somebody saw it, or somebody wanted first aid, they'd run down and ring the fire bell and the firemen would all come running.

"The biggest fire that I attended to, or the biggest fire that I believe we had in Brisbane, was at Hansen's Ranch when the hay barn caught on fire. We fought it all night."

John Wilson was also a member of the Volunteer Fire Department. "We never had the equipment they got today," he remembers. "For most of our fires, we had a water bucket with soaked sacks. But we did have our Social Club. That was the only thing that kept our Fire Department going. We used to have dances every Saturday night up at the social hall, which is now the Catholic Church. We used to give these dances. Then we used the money we raised to buy gasoline for the one truck we had.

"I also used to be the Santa Claus of the Fire Department. Sometimes we'd use the money from the dances and get big boxes of assorted Christmas candies and we'd get walnuts, apples, and oranges. We'd fix up bags or socks and I'd go around on Christmas Eve. I'd go around before the kids would go to bed -- or, if somebody was in bed, they'd wake them up. I used to get a big kick out of it."



*The Brisbane Fire Fighters
in front of the new Fire
House*

"We are all poor people..."

The spirit of volunteerism and mutual aid was not limited to the Fire Department. Other organizations also contributed to helping the unfortunate survive the hardships of the times.

Reported *The Enterprise* on December 16, 1932, "The Voters League is giving its attention to the unemployment issue in Brisbane. There are 87 registered unemployed in the town among about 400 families....One man, a war veteran, who

lives in a mud hut, was given aid by league volunteers. Material for a house, furniture, clothing, and labor were all donated. 'We are all poor people, but we're going to handle our problem by mutual aid,' said Jack Wheeler, secretary of the Voters League. 'The people who helped this man may be asking for aid themselves next week.'

Fred Schmidt also remembers how a number of volunteer groups worked together to improve life in Brisbane. As he recalls, "The clubs and organizations within the community started plugging into programs and started donating their time and their money to get things going. They were all important elements in the

*Brisbane Fire
Department
Women's Auxiliary
--1937*



community. They offered a lot of the manual labor and a lot of the money to develop things that normally the city government would supply. Now all of these organizations were composed of the rank and file of the community, the average citizen of the community."

One of those "average citizens" was Nora Lothrop. "She was just outstanding," recalls Dorothy Radoff. "She and her husband had this big old barn-like house up on Sierra Point Road. They had two daughters -- one about my age,



Brisbane students in the snow --1932

The first Brisbane Girl Scout troop --1932

the other two years younger. Mrs. Lothrop didn't want them going outside to seek entertainment. She wanted them to stay at home. So she just opened up her home to all of us kids who were in that age bracket. It was really like a clubhouse. It was a huge place and we would roll up the carpets, and she would let us play the old Victrola and we'd dance and have a club, a teenage club. Looking back, I don't know how she put up with all of us. She was marvelous, just marvelous, because where was there for kids to go at that time?"

Growing Pains

"I used to feel, oh, I'd get so angry..."

Brisbane faced a number of difficult problems during the Depression period. These problems revolved around unemployment, lack of adequate transportation, garbage, sewers, the creation of a Public Utilities District, and keeping gambling and other illegal activities under control.

In due time, a number of these issues were resolved. One problem, however, that would remain with Brisbane for a longer duration was the highly emotional issue of garbage disposal.

For decades, there had been a running war between the city of San Francisco and the people of Brisbane over garbage disposal. "In 1906, they had to have some place to dump all the debris of the San Francisco earthquake and they started dumping here," relates Jim Williams. "That's what started the dumps."

What began as an emergency measure quickly became a habit for the garbage men of San Francisco. One has only to scan the pages of *The Enterprise* in the 1930s to see how the situation gradually worsened.

From the November 22, 1932 edition:

"Acting in response to repeated protests from residents of Brisbane, San Mateo County's District Attorney issued eleven John Doe warrants for persons guilty of dumping San Francisco garbage within the limits of the Bayshore Sanitary District. All the men are believed to be employees of the J. P. Holland Co. which has contracted to dispose of some six hundred tons of San Francisco garbage daily on the tidelines near Bayshore. Residents of the district have staged a series of indignation meetings..."

From the December 6, 1932 edition:

"San Francisco dumps garbage at Visitacion Cove at the rate of 650 tons per day. Brisbane and Bayshore are in the front line trenches in this fight against San Francisco and its scavengers."

From the March 14, 1933 edition:

"San Francisco has flaunted the laws of the Bayshore Sanitary District as a racketeer flaunts the laws of state and nation..."

From the November 23, 1933 edition:

"The Bayshore Sanitary District is waging a losing battle against San Francisco's dumping of garbage..."

From the August 9, 1935 edition:

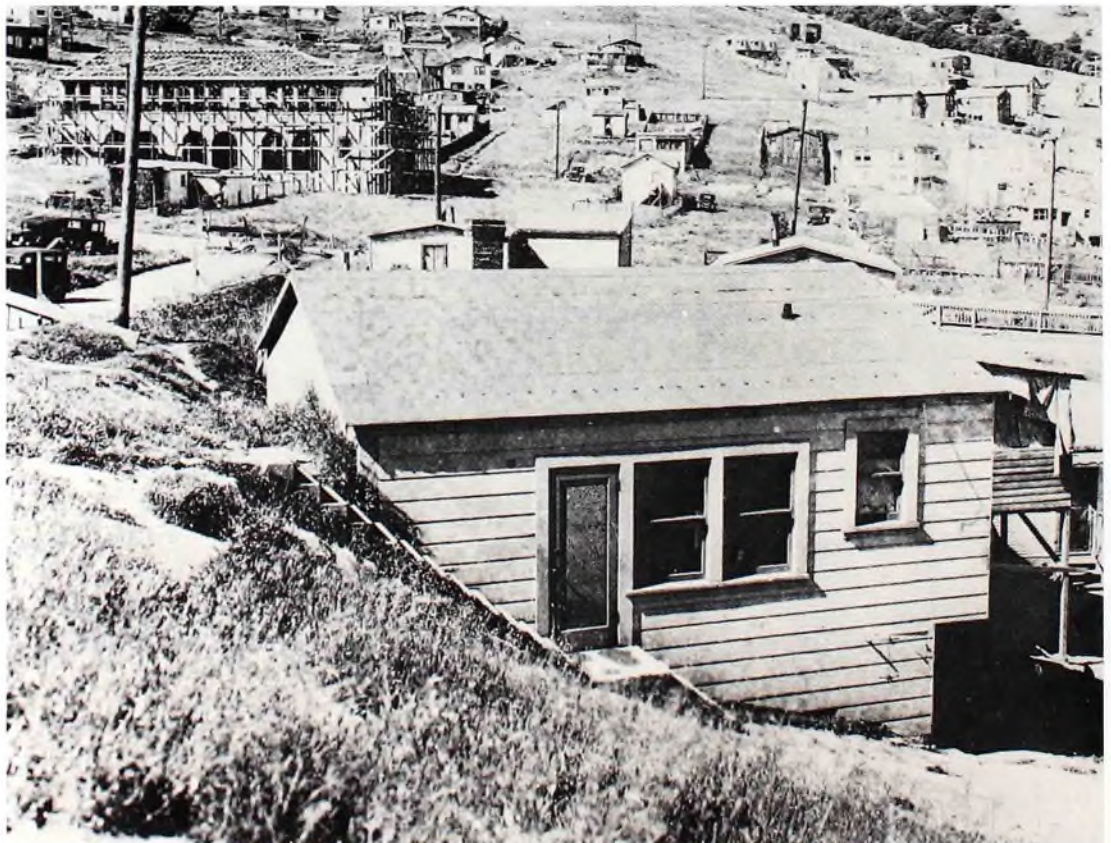
"Calmly passing its disposal problems to San Mateo County, the S.F. Board of Supervisors decided to continue the fill and cover system at Bayshore for the next ten years over the protests of an aroused San Mateo County citizenry."

Dorothy Radoff recalls how deeply this issue affected the people of Brisbane. "I can remember when I was a kid and we first moved to Brisbane. I got on a school bus along with the others who were going to high school. I went to South San Francisco in junior and senior high school. I can still remember when we'd get off the bus, the kids from South City -- you know how high schoolers are, standing in front of a school or out on a lawn or something -- and they'd say, 'Here comes Brisbane, down by the garbage dump.' I can remember then I used to feel, oh, I'd get so angry."

A Triumph for the Voters League

Another challenge facing Brisbane in the '30s was constructing an adequate sewer system. Receiving no aid from either the county or the subdividers who sold the lots without sewage facilities, the citizens of Brisbane attempted to solve the problem by creating a Public Utilities District. This organization was quickly racked by scandal and controversy and largely proved ineffective. The Voters League sponsored a movement against the District and it was eventually disincorporated.

*In the foreground
is the old
Brisbane School
and in the upper
left-hand corner
is the new Brisbane
School under
construction.*





The Mozzetti's gas station --1939



Brisbane Motors on the corner of Visitation and San Bruno in the late '30s

"All off for Little Reno..."

In addition to its other difficulties, Brisbane wrestled with the problem of controlling gambling. "You have to keep in mind that Brisbane being unincorporated for so many years, there weren't any policemen stationed right in town," explains Dorothy Radoff. "The sheriff at that time was noted for overlooking things. There was quite a bit of gambling. Some of the bars had slot machines and gambling in the back rooms or upstairs. The sheriff would raid, but somehow, he never seemed to catch anyone, which became very suspicious after a while.

"We became known as 'Little Reno.' I remember you'd get off the bus and it would be so embarrassing. Depending on the bus driver, most of them would say, 'All off for Little Reno.'"

Mary Arcotti shares many of the same memories. "Oh yes," she recalls, "there was gambling. And prostitution too. Up in the hills. Oh, yes, the taxicabs used to come in. There was a lot of gambling going on. You can bet your life.

"I used to cook at the Brisbane Inn. I was working two jobs. I used to work at the coffee shop from six in the morning until eleven. Then at two, I used to work at the Inn from two until twelve at night. They used to have slot machines there. They had them in the back room. And then they hid them behind sliding doors. When the sheriff notified the owner that the police were on the way, they would close their doors when the police came to raid the place. So they never caught them with the slot machines."

Sometimes irate citizens took the law into their own hands. "They had a lot of Chinese here gambling in those days," remembers John Wilson. "Cars would come out here with half a dozen people and they would all go running into this hall. The police had run them out of San Francisco and then Oakland. So, they had this building here and there could have been maybe 100 or 150 of them in there at a time. They would be smoking opium and the smoke would be pouring out of the place. When I was with the Fire Department, guys knew what went on down there. They put one of their trucks down there and hosed the place down. The Chinese inside came running out of there like a bunch of wild cattle."

"People wanted to rule themselves..."

With all of the varied problems facing the community in the '30s, there were also the first stirrings of a desire for home rule. Fred Schmidt recalls, "There were efforts to incorporate Brisbane. The Social Club and the Voters League were designed to keep the people aware that they were living in an area, that there were things that had to be done. There had to be a water district eventually formed, and things of that nature. So there was a desire to incorporate this community, to break away from county rule. People wanted to rule themselves, and it wasn't such a bad idea..."

But it was an idea whose time had yet to come.



July 4th Parade --1932



The motorcycle contingent for the 1932 Fourth of July Parade

"I came out here from Jacksonville, Florida. I got my discharge there from the service. My sister visited me down there. She's the one who told me about Brisbane. So, I came out here. I remember coming over that hill there. It was wintertime. It was raining, oh, it was raining. But this was the prettiest mountain and setting I think I ever saw. It didn't take me long to kind of fall in love with the place. I just been in Brisbane ever since."

-- Frank Davis



Blair's Rangers, July 4, 1943

Brisbane Goes to War

"...more people here than before or since..."

As the American economy emerged from the doldrums of the Depression and geared up for the war effort, Brisbane enjoyed a renaissance of sorts. By 1940, the town had grown to nearly 2,500 inhabitants. It also had added a number of businesses. In 1941, Rene Poiret built the town's first theater. Other business developments from this time include: Phil Sphrilia's soda fountain, Joe Palladini's grocery store, Walter Gull's produce market, Dick Jonas's Tower Club and Brisbane Drug Company, John DeMarco's celebrated 23 Club, Tiny Burns's cleaners, George Hayward's Builder and Supply Service, Dick Schroeder's Brisbane Hardware Company, Mark Neadeva's Mill and Cabinet Works, and Chuck May's gas station and garage. In addition, Dr. S. J. Guardino, who became Brisbane's first resident physician in 1936, opened a new clinic on Mendocino Street.

In the realm of town improvements, Brisbane residents voted to provide the necessary funds for the Pacific Gas and Electric Company to install new street lights. Under the direction of librarian Gertha McKinney, the citizens helped transfer the small public library from Jonas's Drug Store to a structure on Visitacion Avenue. Despite the town's unincorporated status, the people of Brisbane worked with various county, state, and federal agencies to improve its educational facilities, pavements, sewers, gas mains, electric lines, and telephone services.

Brisbane also enjoyed something of an economic boom during the 1940s. The Brisbane Quarry expanded during the war years with workmen excavating huge



Looking out over Brisbane at the fleet in the Bay

quantities of rocks for the military home front projects. Operating 24 hours a day, the quarrymen employed new machinery and technology to maximize its war efforts. As a result, Brisbane Quarry products were in demand throughout the Bay Area.

A number of people living in Brisbane found work in the surrounding shipyards. "During the war, everybody was working in the shipyards, including myself," recalls Dick Schroeder, a resident of Brisbane since 1938. "We had shipyards right down in South City and Bethlehem across the Bay. They were all over the place. We had a goodly amount of people at Hunter's Point. They worked in the repair yards for the Navy."

"Brisbane was active, then, real active," summarizes Dorothy Radoff. "In fact, there were more people living in Brisbane than there's ever been before or since. At that time, our population got up to 5,000. Now, I believe, it's only 3,000.

"There were so many more businesses here at that time. Things were altogether different. More bustling than it is now. Of course at that time, most women didn't work. People didn't have two cars. They were lucky if they had one. So the woman was car-less. She had to depend on local things mainly for her shopping. So you had a five and ten cent store. You had a bakery. At one time, there were two drugstores. You had about three markets on the main street."

*American Legion
Auxiliary "gun
toters" Louise
Fassett, Mary
Arcotti and
Shirley Bons in
front of the first
American Legion
Hall.*



"Brisbane lost some boys..."

One of the first residents of Brisbane to go off to war was a young man named Walter Blair. In the days before the United States officially entered the war, Blair volunteered to fly for England against the Luftwaffe. His plane was shot down and never recovered. His spirit was perpetuated by the creation of a special civilian defense unit: Blair's Rangers.

To honor his lost son, L. D. "Sarge" Blair organized Blair's Rangers in the spring of 1942. The Rangers were a volunteer unit comprised of 30 to 40 boys and girls and First Class Ranger Tike, a springer spaniel. Ranging in age from 9 to 17, the Rangers were trained to patrol the San Bruno Mountains for possible saboteurs or parachutists.

To join the Rangers, an applicant had only to be "husky enough to pack a nine pound rifle and full field equipment; own stout shoes; and have a decent pair of khakis and shirt for parade." Out of their own pockets, Sarge Blair and his wife paid for the food and other essentials to take the Rangers on their training excursions out into the woods.



*Mr. & Mrs. L.D.
Blair and Blair's
Rangers*

Sarge Blair expressed his mission as follows, "I want to bring home to the youngsters the realization of what it means to be an American and that anything worthwhile doesn't come easy."

"Old Sarge was 100 percent military," relates John Gomez. "He would have his boys marching from his house right out of the entrance to Brisbane. He'd march them maybe down to the Bay and then they'd camp overnight or he'd be marching them up in the hills. They had rifles naturally with no bolts in them so nobody could get hurt and shoot themselves. But they were still packing a rifle, you know the M-1 or the Springfields. Sarge was a good man and he really spent a lot of time with the boys in Brisbane."

The City of Stars

At the same time that Brisbane was gearing up for the war effort, its residents were also trying to improve the quality of life at home. It is from this period that one can trace one of Brisbane's oldest traditions, "The City of Stars."

In 1940, Arthur Kennedy began the tradition by placing a large lighted star on his home during the Christmas season. As the years passed, the idea caught on with the other residents of Brisbane. As they put up their stars, the town became transformed into a festive display of light for travellers coming down Highway 101 or Airport Boulevard. Soon, outsiders were calling Brisbane "America's Christmas Card Town."

"Arthur Kennedy was a rather prominent man in town," explains Dorothy Radoff. "He was the president of the Chamber of Commerce and was very community minded. So, after he put up the first star, the Chamber of Commerce decided the next year that they would put up more stars. From what I understand, when they first started out, they made ten stars a year and they would distribute them to people who promised that they would put them up and take care of them.

Then every year, they kept adding more. That's how the stars started and we became known as the City of Stars. The terrain and all was just perfect for that sort of thing."

"The Second Barbary Coast..."

During this time, the town of Brisbane proved to be an irresistible draw to many a man in uniform.

"We had an Army base at the very top of the hill," remembers John Gomez. "There was also Naval Bases at Hunter's Point and what they called Tanforan. So the Army boys, whenever they got leave from the mountain up there, they'd come down and hit the local clubs like the 23 Club and Dick's Tower. And then the Navy would come in. In those years, it was the Army and the Navy fighting against each other over the same girl."

"It was like the Second Barbary Coast," recalls Mary Arcotti. "We used to have all the sailors from San Francisco in town. They gave it the name, the Second Barbary Coast. They meant that there was wine, women, and sailors. The town got pretty tough at times. A lot of fights. The sailors would come in and then try to get the girls. Then the boys here would try to fight back."

When the war ended in 1945, it was time for the soldiers and sailors to take off their uniforms. In their return from the years of war, in their attempt to build a new life for themselves, Brisbane was to experience the next phase in its history.

A Second Wave

Home From the Wars

If the Great Depression brought a small group of pioneers to Brisbane, a second wave of immigrants came to the city following World War II. These were the men who had won the war and were now trying to build something out of the peace that followed. In the stories of such men as Jim Williams, Jess Salmon, Vince Marsili, and Frank Davis, one can see how this influx of new people into the area shaped the city's future course.

"I never knew I was going to live here..."

For Jim Williams, Brisbane represented a land of opportunity after a period of hard travelling. "I first learned about Brisbane in 1936," he recounts. "Of course, I never knew I was going to live there. I rode a freight train there from Los Angeles. Me and a friend, we left our home in Buffalo, New York, and went to Texas on a trip. We just wandered all around the country. My sister lived in San Francisco at the time, and that was our destination.

"I was only 20 years old. We ran out of money in Los Angeles after staying in San Diego for a couple of days. Almost joined the Marines there. I came close, very close. If I had joined up then, I probably would have been in Guadalcanal when the war broke out. Anyway, we came up here and we jumped off the freight train in the freight yards in Brisbane. We walked up Geneva Avenue in Brisbane and took the street car down to San Francisco -- you know, right downtown.

"Then after the war, I got out of the Navy and I went back to San Bruno and bought a house there. You would never believe that we bought a house in San Bruno, a brand new house, for \$2,500. That house is selling for \$150,000 today. It's still there. Well, when I got out of the service, I had a few thousand dollars saved up. I saw an ad in the paper for a commercial place in Brisbane. That's where I started my body shop then, on Bayshore Boulevard. We bought it and that's how I came to Brisbane."

"I still didn't have a bedroom..."

Jess Salmon also came out of the service looking for a better life. "My father came to the Bay Area to work in the defense industry," he recalls. "So we came to Brisbane. I lived down here on Monterey Street in a chicken coop. I'm serious, it was a chicken coop. A little chicken coop in the back yard. Finally, my family found a home in South San Francisco on Grand Avenue.

"I then got a job working for the Swift & Company meat packing plant. I was going to quit high school and work. I wanted that money, man. The money was good. The boss found out though that I hadn't finished high school and he fired me so I'd go back to school. He said, 'You're fired. But if you go back to school, I'll give you a night job.' So he gave me a nighttime job and I worked nights and I made \$39 a week. That was good money in 1942. Then, the last semester of high school, I went half a day to school and worked from 1:00 P.M. to midnight, every night.

"After high school, I went into the service. I came back in 1946. My parents were still living in the same house in South San Francisco. But they soon got an eviction notice because the owner wanted the building for something else.

"My parents had no place to go. So I gave them my GI loan and my father bought a house. I still didn't have a bedroom. I never had a bedroom all my life until I got married. I got married in August of 1946.... My mother-in-law gave me a vacant lot in Brisbane as a wedding present. I built my home on it from my crap shooting money in the Army. I used to win at craps and then lose my shirt at poker. But I built my house and I raised four kids in Brisbane. I put all four kids and my wife and myself through college while working full-time. I put it all together and even ended up getting elected to City Council. So that kind of established me here and I just stayed. In 1967, I thought about moving to Marin County. But my wife said she'd divorce me before she'd move."

"You just don't drive a bulldozer up Main Street..."

For Vince Marsili, Brisbane represented a good job and a place to settle down. "I was born in San Gregorio, California in 1925," he recalls. "I grew up there picking artichokes and sprouts. Families were all farmers. We moved to Rockaway Beach when I was eight. I grew up there in the artichoke fields. We then moved to Daly City. I worked there as a scavenger, a truck driver, and in the lettuce fields. Finally, I went into the service.

"When I came out of the service in 1945, I went to work for the Crocker Land Company, which is adjacent to Brisbane right now. At that time, it was in county territory. There was nothing there. It was a total of 3,500 acres of undeveloped land which was populated mostly by cattle. It was dairy cattle, not domestic.

"I spent most of my years down there, working under the Crocker Land Company, coming up through the ranks, and being the only resident on the Crocker Estate. I guess my biggest thing was that when the cattle were there, they presented a big problem to Brisbane. Cattle would just get out of the fences and all of a sudden you'd have a bunch of cows down Main Street.

"My main job was to keep the road open going to the TV towers, which is the road that entered Crocker Avenue in Daly City, an old wagon road way back in Spaniard days. It was partially paved going up there, but every winter the trees would fall down and block the road and the radio towers couldn't get in to broadcast. So those were my main functions up there: to keep the road open and to make sure that the cattle stayed where they belonged.

"So I had control of Crocker Park. I had barns up there and everything. I had machinery that was not accessible to anyone else at the time. I guess that's why I fitted in so well. I was there if anyone needed a dump truck or something or a load of sand. I recall one time before Brisbane was a city. It was still under the county's jurisdiction. The county used to come up and want to borrow my bulldozer all the time. One year when the Trinity Road slid down, nobody could get by and their grader went off the road. I had to go up there and help them. I had no way of getting there except I had this bulldozer and I said, 'Well, everything is blocked the other way and I can't get up that way. How am I going to get there?' And they said, 'Just walk it up Main Street.' 'Well,' I said, 'that will tear up the asphalt. They said, 'We'll patch it. Don't worry about it.'

"And that's what we did. I moved the bulldozer up Main Street, drove up there, and got their grader off. They said, 'While you're here, you might as well push all the mud off too.' So I did. After I got through, I walked it back down Main Street and back up the valley.

"Here I am 61 years old and still going strong. I don't think though that you can bring those memories to reality any more now. Those things we've done in the past 30 years you could not do now. You just don't drive a bulldozer up the main street. You just can't put on a show like you did then because people now will not let it happen -- even though people would like to see those things still."

"It didn't take me long to kind of fall in love with the place."

For Frank Davis, Brisbane almost seemed like the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. "I was born in Barto County, Georgia. I grew up in Atlanta, Birmingham, Houston, Atlanta again, and Jacksonville. I came out here from Jacksonville, Florida. I got my discharge there from the service. My sister visited me down there. She's the one who told me about Brisbane. So, I came out here. I remember coming over that hill there. It was wintertime. It was raining, oh, it was raining. But this was the prettiest mountain and setting I think I ever saw. So it didn't take me long to kind of fall in love with the place. I just been in Brisbane ever since.

"When I came here, you didn't have all the businesses and the houses. The recreation hall was down here in the flat right across from the motel. There was a little lake in front of it. Set it off beautiful. All this out here where Crocker's was pastureland. A little creek running through it and all. Kids used to go down there and catch tadpoles. It was beautiful.

"To go back, it was as hard to find a place to live in Brisbane then as it is now. Then I met a Mr. Arthur. He was building a new house over here on Alvarado. In the meantime, he was living in a 27-foot trailer. So me and my wife and kid got one of them little motel rooms until his house was finished. Then I bought the trailer and we lived there for a long time.

"I bought this little restaurant. Pretty small -- I used to feed people in the back room, in the store room. You know bar nights when the bar would close, I'd fill up. I am pretty famous for my fried chicken and hamburgers. I pan-fried my chicken then, you know. I still got the reputation around here.

"There were two fellows in the hardware store at the time, Charlie Dixon and Dick Schroeder. Dick's still around. Charlie left and Dick took over the hardware store. He run it for years. There was also this fellow, John DeMarco. I guess he's one of the first I ever met here.

"He was also one of the best first people I met when I came here. We got to be pretty good friends. John did a lot for Brisbane. Of course, since he run a bar, there's a lot of people who didn't understand that. But I was right there. I had the restaurant right next door so I knew what was going on. John really helped this little town out a whole lot. Even after it became a city. He was all out for any charity occasion that'd come along, things like that. And if a friend needed \$50, \$100, it was Johnny, you know. He done different things for the community. He's the one that started out trying to get a swimming pool.

"John also brought us entertainment we hadn't been used to. Like Johnny Cash and Webb Pierce, Bob Wills, Hank Snow and different ones. It got to be a pretty lively town on Friday and Saturday night. People worked hard here, but when the weekend came around, they played hard too. The 23 Club had a big dance floor and every weekend it was crowded. I moved my little restaurant right next door to it, with the runway from the dance floor of the 23 Club into the restaurant. It was built that way to make it convenient for people in the bar to go through there and have a bite to eat.



The 7-Mile House in the 1940s

"I also had a drive-in across the highway. You know the Bayshore used to be the main highway through here when I came here. Your freeway was probably just a dream then. There was a main highway and there was a big all-night filling station and truck stop across there. They had bunks and all and showers for the truck drivers. It was a 24-hour business, so I had the "Chicken Basket" there, as we called it. All my customers from town came over there as well as the truck drivers. So all in all it was a pretty busy place.

"Yes, I came out here first in 1946. It hasn't been quite 40 years. It was in early '46. I don't know. I just fell in love with the place. I guess I just got to be part of it. Knew everybody at that time and this place was always good weather. If there was nice weather, we had it. The fog never got down in the city. It always stayed up on the mountain. Slept under the same covers all year long..."

The First "Western Days"

"Brisbane has always been considered a Western town..."

As Frank Davis puts it, Brisbane in the late '40s and early '50s was a town that liked to "work hard and play hard too." As the '40s gave way to a new decade, the people of Brisbane had good reason to celebrate their accomplishments. The town was successfully assimilating a new wave of Americans back from the war. These men and women were busy building businesses, raising families, and getting about the business of finding the good life after the hard times of Depression and war.

By 1950, Brisbane was well on its way to becoming a modern town. It could boast of a number of diverse organizations and services. These included a movie theater, a small retail district, a Y.M.C.A., the Brisbane Homeowner's Association, the American Legion and Auxiliary, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Lions Club, the Witts Club, the Brisbane Garden Club, the Vellums, and the Circle 8 Square Dance Group. Many Brisbane residents felt it was time to celebrate the town's accomplishments and future promise. They found a way to do this in a unique public celebration of their heritage and hopes. They called it "Western Days."

"Brisbane has always been considered to be like a Western town," relates John Gomez. "A lot of people here had horses. Every now and again, they'd have a parade and the horses would be tied up to bumpers on vehicles and bars and so forth. Parades were always great in Brisbane. They always had parades around the Fourth of July and different celebrations and so forth. I believe it may have been the Chamber of Commerce that said, 'Hey, let's have Western Days.'"

If John Gomez is uncertain about the exact origin of Western Days, there are a number of fascinating stories behind the evolution of this unique festival.

Western Days --1950s





*Western Days --
1950s*

"I said we've got to make some money..."

For Jim Williams, Western Days was a result of a clear-cut need. "I was president in 1949 and 1950 of the Lions Club," he recalls. "In those days, gambling was big in Brisbane. There were slot machines. There were all kinds of gambling games. After all, Brisbane was a long way from the county government. So, it wasn't that gambling was legal. It was just overlooked.

"At any rate, I got the idea for these Western Days. I said we've got to make some money. We didn't have any money in the Lions Club at all. I thought, 'We'll bring the people into town and then get the money off them. We'll put up some stalls and sell them food and let them play slot machines and beat the dealer and do a lot of gambling games.'

"Dick Schroeder knew the sheriff at the time. Dick said, 'Let's go see the sheriff.' We went down and saw the sheriff and told him exactly what we were going to do with the slot machines and all that stuff. Well, we went right to his home and he was in his bathrobe and everything. A big guy. He was really a huge guy. He said, 'Well, Jim, I didn't hear a thing about it. I don't even know what's going on. I'm not coming down. So you do what you want.' I told him we wanted it for charity and things of that nature. And that is what we did it for.

"We came up with the theme of Western Days from the sense of Brisbane being a western town. In those days, we didn't have any sidewalks. Just a little old main street with a strip of pavement down the middle. So it was Western.

"Anyway, that's where it started. And that first one was a good one. Everybody was dressed up. We had on beards and cowboy outfits. We even had a donkey baseball game. We played baseball on a donkey. I would get off and hit the ball and then jump on the donkey and run to first base. But sometimes the donkey wouldn't want to go that way. Once, I jumped on the donkey and fell clear down on the other side. I'll never forget that a couple of guys rode the donkeys right into the 23 Club.

"That first year we cleared \$1,900 in a week. That was a lot of money for our club. Particularly in the 1950s. So we were rich. The next year, I was out and Cliff Mozzetti was the club president. They put it on again. Well, the sheriff had died in the meantime. So there was a new sheriff. Well, they had these gambling games and they thought, 'It's the same thing as last year.' But they didn't go and see nobody.

"One night, all of a sudden, the sheriff's cars just came around and took all the Lions members off to Redwood City. Just arrested them! It happened! They were in jail down there quite a while until they finally straightened it out and knew that these guys are alright people, that they were just doing it for charity. They let them go after four or five hours."

"In those days, you kind of made everybody's house your own..."

For Vicki Hobson and Mary Golden, Western Days was simply a continuation of a number of Brisbane activities. As young girls who came to Brisbane in the late 1940s, they recall how the celebration evolved. "When it first started, it wasn't a club function," relates Vicki Hobson. "It was a city function. They started with these barbecues at the 23 Club, a long, long time ago. And then the Lions Club picked up on the barbecues. They used to have a barbecue almost every month, or every two months, and it was a different kind of dress. One was the Roaring Twenties, the Gay '90s, Mexican, Hawaiian, and everybody used to dress the part. And then it started the Western Days."

For both women, Western Days was part of a larger community spirit in Brisbane, an atmosphere where people joined together to entertain themselves. "We didn't have the fast food or video places in those days," recalls Mary Golden. "But we did have Friday Night Dances in grammar school. We also had a Teen Center. We always had ping-pong and all sorts of activities."

*The 1950 Christmas
Parade sponsored by the
Lions Club*



"You could dance in the Teen Center," continues Vicki Hobson. "They had music there. They had an old jukebox. Everybody in town would go. My parents rented it for my sixteenth birthday party. All the kids hung crepe paper and we danced and ate cake.

"We also used to get together at the Brisbane Theater. They had an Amateur Night on Saturdays. We would get up there and either pantomime or jitterbug. We thought we were pretty hot there in front of a whole audience. It was like an old family theater. You'd get up on stage before the movie started. Everybody could do whatever they wanted. You'd win a prize and then see the movie."

"That was in 1953," explains Mary Golden. "It was great having a theater. Such a convenience. The kids now they have to get on a bus or drive somewhere. But just having the theater here was so nice. It gave us something to do and kept us off the streets. We also would go to the Fountain. It was a great place to hang out. You could get a big basket of french fries and a Coke. It was a place where you felt relaxed and welcome and you could play music."

"We never had any of the kinds of problems that kids do now," concludes Vicki Hobson. "No violence, or any of that. No crime. In those days, you kind of made everybody's home your own. Nobody was better off than anyone else. We were all the same. We used to switch sweaters, switch clothes. None of us had a wardrobe that amounted to anything. It was the same with everybody that lived in town. All the kids were the same. There wasn't a family that had more money than we did."



Soap Box Derby --1940s



Whatever the exact origin of Western Days, then, it certainly sprang from a long-time tradition in Brisbane of self-help and neighborly feeling. Still, the festival only briefly flourished in the 1950s. It was discontinued after a few years as a result of too many public disturbances. But, it was too good an idea to simply die. As Brisbane matured as a community, people would attempt to resurrect Western Days for a second try.

Moving Towards Incorporation

The Desire for Home Rule

As the people of Brisbane lived, worked, and played through the 1950s, they vigorously sought to define and defend their way of life. In this period of transition and development, one can see a community attempting to come to terms with itself and with its future.

Ultimately, the people of Brisbane had to confront the issue of home rule. A number of factors were leading many residents to conclude that the town needed to take charge of its own destiny. These compelling factors included such issues as a lack of adequate capital to ensure future growth, the difficulties of obtaining adequate civic services, and the concern that powerful neighbors might dictate Brisbane's future course.

Against these concerns, many residents felt another powerful consideration. They were equally concerned that, by incorporating, Brisbane might lose that special quality of rural isolation that so sharply distinguished it from other Bay Area communities.

"Banks outside of Brisbane were reluctant to lend money..."

Many Californians recall the 1950s as a period of unparalleled economic growth and development. As the rejuvenated American economy turned its strength and capital toward domestic projects, many Bay Area communities experienced an explosive growth in housing, public construction, and city services.

Indeed, some of this growth did affect the community of Brisbane. Most spectacularly, the state of California began construction of a new Bayshore Freeway in 1954 to take the place of the antiquated two-lane Bayshore Highway. As a resident of Brisbane during that time, Dick Schroeder recalls the impact of the new freeway on the town. "When they put in the freeway, that relieved us of all the traffic. Before, we had more accidents. We even used to have a 'Dead Man's Curve.' People used to pass over the double line and boom, there was a head-on collision. So that new freeway really helped Brisbane."

For the most part, however, Brisbane was comparatively untouched by the building boom of the 1950s. "There wasn't too much of a housing boom here," relates Dick Schroeder. "Most of the houses here were built in '38 and '39. During the war, you couldn't get any materials to build a house. And then afterwards, you couldn't get any money. Somehow, the banks didn't want to come in here."

As a resident who came to Brisbane in the mid-1950s, Jay Fichera can expand upon the same theme. "When we were not incorporated, we didn't have a bank here," remembers Fichera. "Banks outside of Brisbane were reluctant to lend money. And if they did, where they could have loaned \$50,000, they would loan half that much or less. They were prejudiced. They had thumbs down on Brisbane. That's why Brisbane took so long to develop really. Even after we incorporated, it was quite some time before anybody got a substantial loan to build here in town. I was fortunate. I went out of town to get the money to build my place.



"A lot of people would have liked to come here after the war. It was such a nice place. But we just didn't have the facilities to supply them. There was no money around. People weren't building because they didn't have the money. There was a lot of room, a lot of beautiful empty lots.

"We used to have a lot of railroad activity down in the lower part of Brisbane, across the highway. Some of the old timers would turn around, when we got together, and they would kid one another, and they would say, 'Hey, there's no lumber down at the railroad yards anymore. That's why people are not building in Brisbane.' They meant that all the lumber that came out of the freight yards had been taken and used to build homes here. That's a joke. But there is some truth to it."

"One costs you fifty cents...another one costs you a dollar..."

As residents of an unincorporated city, the people of Brisbane also had to struggle for such basic civic services as street paving, police protection, and fire protection.

"When we arrived, some of the streets were still dirt roads and some were cobbled," relates Jay Fichera. "Someone came up with the idea that we should repave San Bruno Avenue because there were ditches and big chuck holes. Some of the elderly people, when the rains came, couldn't cross the street unless they came down to the corner of Visitacion Avenue. So I decided to join a committee and act as its chairman and we got enough votes to pave San Bruno Avenue. To do that, all the people who lived on San Bruno Avenue would have to sign that they would pay an additional taxation for the paving.

"Then we tried to buy more police protection from San Mateo County. They wanted everything and wanted to give us nothing. They wanted to come in and circulate around the town maybe once a day, once in the morning, or maybe eight times a week. If anything of an emergency nature was to happen, we would have been at their mercy. We would have had to wait for them to get here whenever they got here. For police protection, that's no good."

Dick Schroeder echoes the same concerns regarding the lack of police protection at that time. "The Sheriff of San Mateo sent out two guys to be here all day. But at twelve o'clock, they went home. Of course, most of the trouble starts between twelve and two when there wasn't a sheriff around."

In addition, the people of Brisbane had to struggle to keep their own Volunteer Fire Department solvent. "I don't think anybody or any community throughout the entire state of California had a better Volunteer Fire Department than Brisbane," Jay Fichera proudly states. "We did everything. We bought our own trucks. We maintained our own trucks. We built our own trucks. And this was all from people who volunteered their time. We had no paid person in the department. We used to run bake sales to get money to do things. We ran parties. We ran dances. We did everything under the sun to make money and maintain our Fire Department."

The entire system for providing social services was complex, cumbersome, and expensive. "We had a fire district, a water district, a police district, and a sewer district," summarizes Dick Schroeder. "All these districts! One costs you fifty cents. Another costs you a dollar. After we got incorporated, all of those districts came within \$3.20 of the city. In other words, it would have cost about \$6.00 just for the different districts."

Thus, as Brisbane stood poised to enter a new decade, the town also was moving towards its greatest act of self-assertion and independence: incorporation.

Incorporation

A Matter of Evolution

On May 2, 1960, a group of citizens called a public meeting to discuss whether or not the people would like to study the feasibility of incorporation. At this meeting, a committee was created to study the issue. The committee consisted of John E. Turner, Fred Schmidt, Louis J. Duncan, and Barbara Pratt.

The drive towards incorporation did not spring up in Brisbane on any one day or at any one hour. The first public discussion of the issue goes as far back as the 1930s. Further, as many public documents show, often people referred to the unincorporated status of the town as an explanation for any or all ills.

Incorporation then was more of a matter of evolution than of any one dramatic turn of events. It took time for the majority of Brisbane's residents to come to the view that there was a real need for incorporation.

To understand the whole issue, one needs to see the underlying process behind incorporation. To do this, one should look at the issue from the differing perspectives of three active participants: Dick Schroeder, Jay Fichera, and Fred Schmidt.



*Visitacion
Avenue --1940s*

"They thought they were going to run the town, but they didn't get far..."

As an active participant in the struggle to incorporate, Dick Schroeder describes how the people of Brisbane gradually made up their minds about Brisbane's future course. As Schroeder remembers, the issue of incorporation was considered in the late 1950s and rejected.

"Two years before the actual incorporation," he relates, "we tried to incorporate, and lost. People claimed that the state was going to pour something down their throats. The people that were at the head of the incorporation drive said, 'Well, we have to have it by February in order to get the state monies.' But, any time you try to force something down people's throats, they just vote no.

"In the first attempt at incorporation, we had all of the Crocker Estate as a part of Brisbane. Crocker wanted us to incorporate, to get away from Daly City. They had a consulting outfit come to promote the deal. Well, they promoted a little bit too much. They said, 'Well, this is the old Brisbane and that's new Brisbane.' Yeah, they thought they were going to run the town, but they didn't get very far. People here in Brisbane figured that they were going to have large buildings in there with smokestacks and stuff like that."

Schroeder also remembers how the tide turned in favor of incorporation as the people of Brisbane considered the issue two years later.

"It was a matter of educating people to support incorporation," he recalls. "Just by talking to them, and showing them what could be gained, and what we were losing as far as extra taxes and things like that. In addition, the county started talking about Urban Renewal. I went to a meeting of the county supervisors in Redwood City. After the meeting, in the back end of the room, I saw they had all of Brisbane in pictures. They showed how they were going to start Urban Renewal in Brisbane. They had it all figured out how they were going to force Urban Renewal on the whole thing and start all new. Just like they were going to bulldoze everything and start all over.

"They were going to get people's houses and not give them anything for it. They would just wipe things out and give people a little bit for the assessed value. But that didn't amount to anything. It wouldn't have been enough to buy a lot anywhere else. So we went to the next meeting in Redwood City and started complaining right then and there that they had better hold this thing off until we could have a few hearings.

"That really cooked the county's goose in a hurry. That was in 1960. That's when the whole thing started for the second incorporation movement. That's when incorporation really got moving in a hurry."

*The Auto Court
as it looked in the
'40s*



"Incorporation, that's a touchy subject..."

As a participant in the struggle for incorporation in the early 1960s, Jay Fichera offers an eyewitness account of some of the complex emotions and attitudes surrounding the issue. In particular, Fichera recalls how relations between the people of Brisbane and both the Crocker Estate and Southern Pacific affected the move to incorporate.

"Incorporation, that's a touchy subject," remembers Fichera. "Up until the time we incorporated, the only governing body in the City of Brisbane was the Fire Department. The Fire Department had a three-man commission. I was one of the commissioners. We were the only governing body with any authority. As such, we had our fingers in everything else that happened in town. We tried to keep everything straight and honest.

"I wanted incorporation very badly, because I am a firm believer in self-government. But one of the reasons why we kept stalling was my insistence that the Crocker Estate give us more ground, more acreage, more help with a first-class post office, and a bank. I told the Crocker Estate how I felt about these issues at a number of private meetings. Now they didn't see fit to give us more ground. They couldn't help us move from a third-class to a first-class post office. And, even though they had a connection with Crocker National, they said there wasn't enough people and money here in Brisbane to support a bank. Now I can understand that. But they wouldn't even promise us a bank, or promise to look into it in the future, to see whether we deserved a bank after we started developing some of their grounds.

"When the Crocker people couldn't promise any of these things, the only solution I had was, 'If you want me to support incorporation, give us the Crocker Estate. All of the grounds.' At the time, they couldn't see fit to do that. So I couldn't see fit to support incorporation.

"I am ready to say that most of the people who opposed incorporation only did so because we were not getting enough from the Crocker Estate. The Crocker Estate would only give us up until the Tunnel Road. That's the boundary line that Crocker was willing to give up and incorporate. I, for one, and several others who are still active in Brisbane, opposed it because we wanted all of the Estate.

"A lot of people may not realize it but Southern Pacific has always been a friend of Brisbane. When we incorporated, they were willing not to oppose us or give us any trouble or put any obstacles in our way. They very willingly came in. Now whether some people might have a difference of opinion, well, I don't think they know all the facts. SP has been our friend and still is our friend.

"Despite our objections over the Crocker Estate, there was still a very strong movement to incorporate. Two or three groups that were working individually really got together and decided, 'Hey, this is really it.' I can remember Arthur Kennedy, who did quite a bit for this town, was one of the people for incorporation. So he was on the other side of the fence from myself. He said, 'Let's not fight for this or that. We'll get it later.' I said, 'No way, we get it now or we'll never get it.' So therefore we were agreeable as far as the town incorporating. Yet we disagreed on what we were looking for in terms of benefits for the town.

"To sum it up, I would say that the primary reason for incorporation, or at least the reason why we agreed to incorporate with so much speed at that time, was because we didn't want the supervisors in San Mateo County, or anybody else, to come in here and tell us what to do and how to do it, and to shove it down our throats. I don't think that the people of Brisbane will ever stand for that, from anybody."

"Like any old town you'd read about in the old wild West..."

As a member of the original feasibility committee, Fred Schmidt has a unique perspective on the entire issue. "First, the fire district was formed and a water district was formed. When the water district was formed, they had to buy out the private agencies. That was a big battle. So, that's how the community sort of developed. It developed like any old town you'd see on television or read about in the old wild West, the same deal.

"In the late '50s, there was a desire to incorporate the community and try to absorb all these districts so that it was under one control and that improvements could be made in an orderly fashion. It was also done to protect the community. There was a program set up in California called 'Urban Development.' What this meant was that they would take urban areas that had developed poorly because of the efforts of the people to build their own homes in a ramshackle way. Well, a good part of Brisbane was developed by families. It was all home-built stuff. There was some fear that this Urban Development Program would just bulldoze the whole community and start all over again. Well, that fear kind of created in people's minds the thought that we ought to have our own town so we could control it ourselves, so we could keep the rural atmosphere, and not worry about this or worry about that.

"On the other hand, incorporation had failed in elections before because the people were a little bit afraid, I think, of what it might cost them -- incorporated communities or towns seemed to cost more than county-controlled systems. Some of the people really didn't want a local government coming up and looking into their affairs. They didn't want the mayor or somebody else telling them what the heck to do. They were happy with the county setup. They thought it would be more rural if it was kept in the county setup.

"When I was on the investigating committee, I wasn't sure that incorporation was proper for the community. In fact, I wasn't for it. Again I was a little bit afraid of the amateur politician. On the other side of the coin, America is made up of amateur politicians. At any rate, after looking into the possibility of being put under the bulldozer, so to speak, I decided that perhaps incorporation would be the right thing to have."

After six months of study, the committee recommended that the town vote to incorporate a 2.5 square mile area. In addition, a budget was proposed, along with suggested boundary lines, and future city plans. Finally, a date for an election was set: September 12, 1961. On that date, the residents of Brisbane were asked, "Shall the proposed City of Brisbane become incorporated as a general law city?"

The response was overwhelmingly positive. A total of 710 people voted "yes," while only 296 voted "no."

The voters also elected their first city council. This body consisted of John E. Turner, Jess Salmon, Ernest Conway, James Williams, and Edward Schwenderlauf.

In one bold stroke, the people of Brisbane had voted to incorporate into a city and elected a body of men to help govern them. Under their guidance, Brisbane stood poised at the beginning of a new era in its history.

"It reminds me of a big family..."

As the early history of Brisbane demonstrates, the town has always been marked by a spirit of independence and pride. Bob Lloyd, who has served as a school superintendent in Brisbane, expresses how this spirit of vocal partisanship and pride has extended over the years. "People in Brisbane pride themselves on their independence. They are tremendously independent. There almost seems to be a need to be outspoken. The town has had a history of controversy. There seems to be always a pot stirring somewhere."

No matter how bitter the struggle or controversy, Brisbane has maintained the cohesiveness and small-town flavor that goes hand in hand with this spirit of independence. "To know Brisbane, you have to go to one of our meetings," elaborates Dorothy Radoff. "If you really want to see this spirit of independence, they are really good. They are like the old town hall meetings that they had when the nation first started.

"Oh, this town has always been fiery about one thing or another. I think it's sort of remarkable in its way. I look back and I think, 'You know these people are really remarkable.'

"Some call Brisbane, 'The City That Grew Out Of The Depression.' But many of us call it, 'The City With A Heart.' We've had a lot of dissension here, but to me, it reminds me of a big family. In most big families, the brothers and sisters argue, but when the chips are down, they have a heart."



