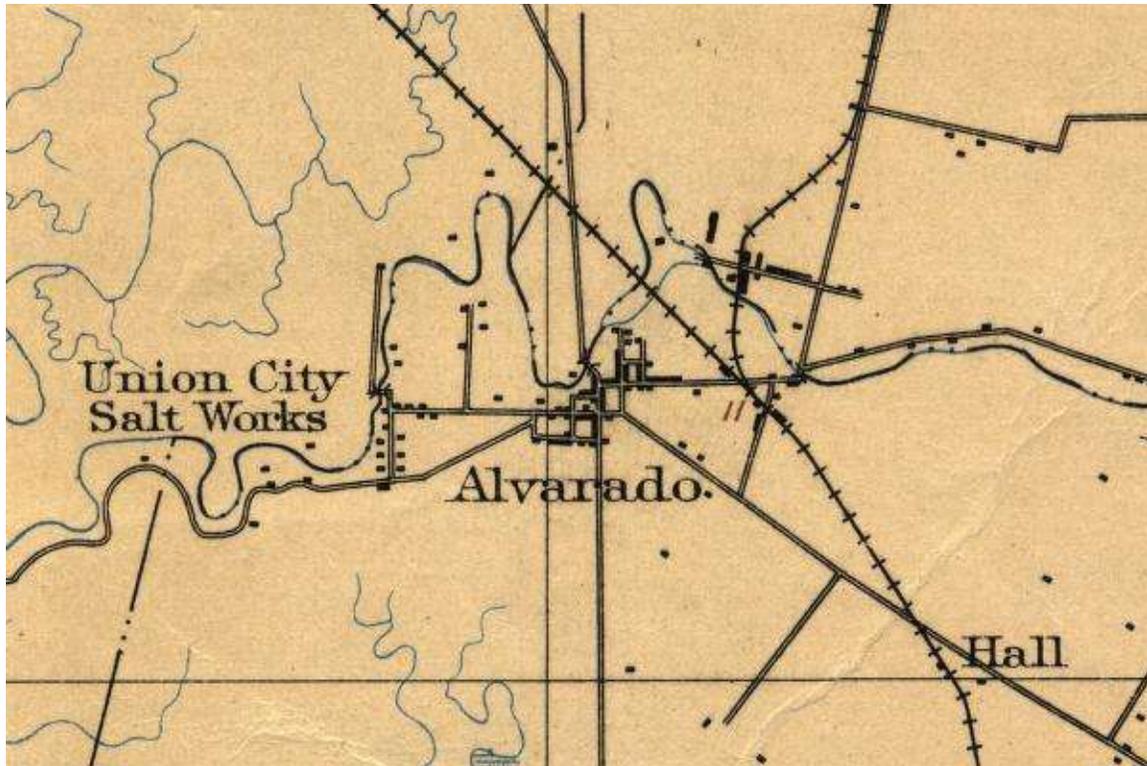


Alvarado Boy



A fictional account of a boy growing up in Alvarado in 1883

By
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Introduction

This paper is intended to teach local history through the eyes of an 8 year old boy, growing up in Alvarado in 1883. The paper covers the typical things that an 8 year old boy would do and see in Alvarado for that time period. It covers historical places, events and people that existed at the time. The writing is aimed at the 3rd grade level, so those students learning local history in the 3rd grade can read it themselves.

In the spirit of the “American Girl” series of books, which also teaches history through the eyes of children, this paper is entitled “Alvarado Boy.”



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Alvarado, 1883

My name is James Crandell, but everyone calls me “Jimmy”. I’m 8 years old. I was born in June of 1875. I live near a town called Alvarado. I live on a farm with my Pa, Andrew, my Ma, Anna, and my sister, Sally.

Our farm is just south and west of Alvarado. We grow mostly potatoes and sugar beets. For our garden, we grow carrots, tomatoes, cabbage, and onions. We even have fruit trees like apple, cherry and plums. We have a cow for milk and some chickens for eggs.

I attend Alvarado Grammar School. I’m in the third grade. There are five other kids in my class. There are about 35 kids in my school. The school is on the east end of town before you get to the railroad tracks.

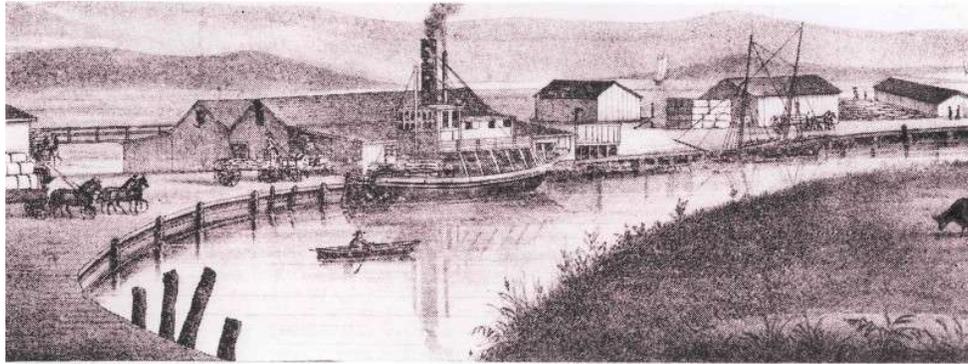
Before I go to school, I have to do some chores. I have to go outside and help Pa milk our cow. I have to set out the hay for the cows and horses. Sally only as to get the eggs from the chickens. We then have breakfast. Ma cooks us beacon and eggs with toast.



Me and Sally walk through town to get to school. I always get there early so I can spend some time playing with my friends, David and Tom. Tom is a year older than I am, but we still get along fine. David is my age. When it is time for school to start, one of the teachers will ring the school bell and we all go into our classes.

The school house has two stories and four class rooms. They divide the kids into a couple of grades per classroom. Since I’m in the third grade, I’m in one of the downstairs classrooms with the fourth graders. In a couple of years I’ll be upstairs with the older kids.

After school I have to run home to help Pa with the farm. I have to help weed between the potato and sugar beet plants. I have to help keep the stable clean. After all the chores are done, we have dinner. After dinner I have to work on my school work. Every now and again, Pa will spend an evening at one of the local saloons. He says it is a good time to talk with the other farmers about farming. I think he likes it because he likes beer and card games.



On Saturday I also have to do some chores, but because there is no school, I have more time to play with my friends. We live near the landing where the boats come to pick up the vegetables and take them to San Francisco. David lives just a few farms away, so me and him will spend part of the day hanging around the landing watching all of the boats come and go. We like to see the hay scow-schooners loaded real high with all the hay bales. Old man Barron does not mind too much when we hang around.



If Ma or Pa need something from the store, they will write a note and send me and Sally to Mr. Ralph's store. Mr. Ralph will read the note and get the items that Ma or Pa needs. He will put the items in a bag and mark what was bought on our account. If me and Sally have been really good, Pa will add to the note for Mr. Ralph to give us a couple pieces of penny candy. There are a number of different flavored candy sticks. Sally likes the lemon and I like the cherry.



Occasionally the Odd Fellows will put on a dance at their hall. Since Pa is a member of the Odd Fellows, we always go to the dance. I'm too young to do any dancing, but I listen to the music and get to chat with my friends. I even get to have some punch and cake.

The funnest thing to do in the summer is the picnics held at the picnic grounds near Decoto. In May, we went to the Pioneers' Picnic, in June was the Ancient Order of United Workmen Picnic. We are not part of both groups, but we just like to go for the fun of it. The main picnic of the year is for the 4th of July. There is always a band playing music. There are different games to play. They have tug-of-war and chasing the greased pig. Sometimes there are shooting contests and the blasting of anvils.

To get to the picnic, Pa hitches a horse to our buggy, we all pile in and head out. We travel on the road that goes right past the Whipple farm and straight to the picnic ground.

In the fall I have to help Pa with the harvest. When the potatoes are harvested, we sell them to someone at the Landing. They then ship the potatoes off to San Francisco. We keep a bunch in our cellar for us to eat.



Once the sugar beets are harvested, we have to take them over to the sugar beet factory to sell them. The factory will take some of our beets and test them to see how much sugar is in them. The more sugar, the more money we get. I like visiting the sugar beet factory. It is the biggest building in town. They have sheds full of sugar beets.

On the other side of the factory are the cow sheds where they keep the cattle that eat the pulp that comes out of the factory. Once the sugar beets have been pressed for the sugar, the beet pulp is dried and then feed to the cattle. Mr. Hellwig, the local butcher, buys the cattle and butchers them up and sells them in his store.

I see a lot of chinamen around the factory. Pa says that they do most of the work in the factory. Near the school is an area we call "Chinatown". This is where the chinamen live and have stores. They have their own saloons because they are not allowed in other saloons. They also have a couple of laundries.

Last year, just after the harvest Pa, took the us all to Oakland. We walked to the Alvarado train station, just past the school and next to the Riverside Hotel. Pa bought our tickets and we waited for the train. When the train arrived, we hoped on and took our seats. This was the first time I was ever on a train. I was amazed at how fast we were going. Pa says that the train was going 30 miles an hour.

We went through Mt. Eden, San Leandro and made it to Oakland. We spend the day shopping for new school clothes and other items. When the sun started doing down, we hoped on the train for home.