

Salvation Army Colonists on their own Land.



What is being done on the Domain at Soledad.

they were, the pioneers of a movement that may be worldwide. The first concentrated attempt of a big institution to practically improve the condition of the poor by giving them an opportunity to help themselves. And yet they went about everything they did as if they were simply starting a little farm of their own. But then it is their own, or at least a part of it.

"How do you like this arrangement of the tract?" asked the engineer of Major Winchell when he had a plat laid out on a sheet of drawing paper.

"You see here," he continued after the sheet had been spread out on a flour barrel top and scanned carefully by all present, "this is the outline of our land—517 acres altogether. It is something like a triangle with the top cut off. Now here, just along the upper edge, the county road runs. That is the highest part of the land, so the drainage will be all the other way.

"Now, I think it will be a good idea to start two roads at a single point on the county road and run them down hill parallel to the sides of the land. This will give us two oblong pieces with a triangular piece in the center.

"It is my idea to cut up the oblong tracts into ten-acre lots that will have nearly square corners. The lots in the triangle will naturally be irregular in shape. Here at the apex of the triangle I think we will locate a park and lawns and also the offices and stores. Blacksmith-shops, carpenter-shops, etc., can also be located here. You see, these lots are so queer in outline and proportion that they would make very undesirable farms. A ten-acre lot in here would be over a quarter of a mile long. Of course, there will be roads running along through the triangle and a few five-acre farms just below the office buildings. What do you think of the plan?"

The drawing was carefully considered for a long time and discussed by all present. Major Winchell made comparisons with a notebook, and at last said: "I think that will do. Yes, I am sure it will do. It seems to meet all the requirements of the present and of the future. I do not think it can be improved upon. You can get out your instrument and go to work."

In less than an hour Engineer Haskell had started to locate the first corner.

Of the five men on the ranch it turned out that only two were really future colonists.

Of course, they will all be there more or less, but only Traver and Gillespie will make it their permanent home from the start. They are really the first colonists in this big movement.

"How do you like your new home?" I asked Colonist Traver about the time he got his oil stove in working order.

"I am pleased with it," he replied, "and think it will be just what I want. But I don't like the way some people look upon us. I am not a pauper in any way. I am able and willing to earn my living, and always have done so. But I think the colony is a good thing and only wish my family was down here."

For, we drove into an inclosed piece of land covered with vines and fruit trees.

"This is our orchard," said Major Winchell. "Here are twenty acres in full bearing. There is a large variety of good trees, comprising nearly all of the fruit grown in California. It is our intention to reserve this for the colony. That is, none of the colonists will have for his own. All the fruit grown on it will be divided among the different families, according to numbers. There is more than enough to supply the needs of all who will locate here. There will be all the fresh fruit they need and also enough to be canned and preserved for winter use. We will not attempt to sell any of it."

Just to the west of the orchard is a county road running toward the north, and at a point on this we came to a place about fifty feet higher than the country to the eastward. Here the whole tract of the Salvation Army's colony land was spread out before us.

"It looks rather bare now, with only that little house in the middle," I said, as I looked toward the east.

"That's true," replied Major Winchell, "but in a year from now it will be covered with farmhouses, surrounded by gardens, and have a population of nearly 400 people. There will be a big crowd of people here by Christmas."

"This land," the major continued, "is what has been known as the Romie ranch. The owner has allowed us to have it for four years with the option of buying. We do not have to pay a cent until that time, and then only a small percentage of the price of \$50 an acre. But if we decide to take it we must pay for it in ten years.

"Most of the material, machinery and lumber, we have also obtained on about the same terms. Besides this we have received donations of many things we will need. In fact we will have to spend very little money except for freight.

"All the cash we have to start with is about \$5000, which has been subscribed by different prominent men throughout the State. Of course, under these circumstances, the money will go a long way. Still we need about \$20,000 to perfect the scheme, and I have every confidence that we can get it."

"But," I asked, "don't the people need to have any money who desire to become colonists?"

"Not a cent. In fact we will not take people that have money. What we want are strong, willing people who will make the best of their advantages. We take them on probation for two years, and, if they are not satisfactory they will have to go. Of course we will not take unmarried men under any circumstances."

"But how will these people maintain themselves, or will the colony support them as a community?" I asked.

"There is to be no community scheme about it," Major Winchell answered. "Each person is to be treated as an individual and must work out his own destiny with the same advantages as his neighbors or give up. While our plan is co-operative it stops at the door of each man's home.



CHARLES GILLESPIE.

"This is certainly a fine piece of land, and I am sure our colony is going to be a success. I am glad to be here and proud that I am one of the two first colonists to arrive. I now have a chance to work and am my own boss."



E.A. TRAVER.

"I am not a pauper in any sense of the word, but I believe this colony is going to be good for me and I shall only be too happy to bring my family down as soon as we have accommodations for them."

"You'll find the Salvation Army colonists in that little white house away over there by the clump of trees. Five of them there now. All got here last Sunday morning in a big wagon hauled by the finest horses I ever see. Think they are going to solve the labor problem and I kinder think they will from the way they have started in. Never seen such workers in my life."

Leaving my informant by the wayside I drove over to the little white house by the clump of trees. The wind was blowing as it only can in the Salinas Valley and the little clump of trees were singing a weird song and waving their branches wildly when I got there.

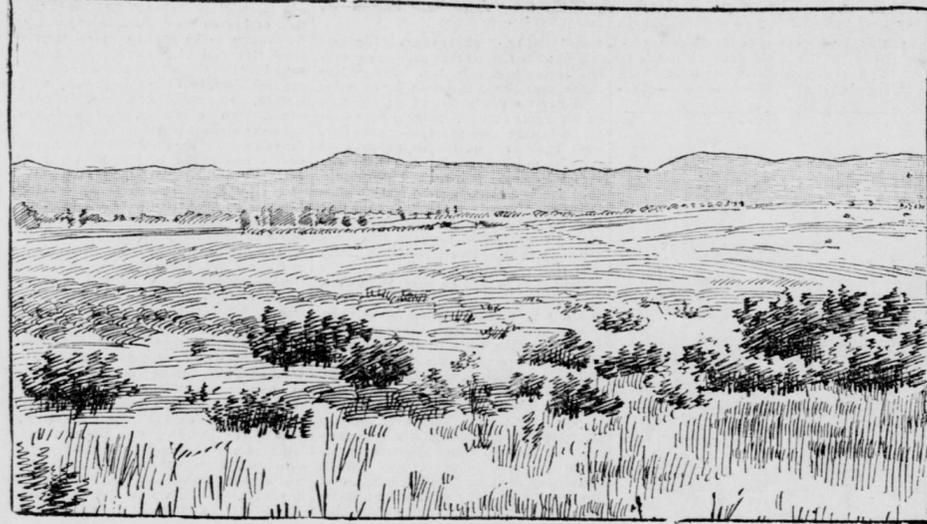
Cheerless enough, I thought, as I looked about. The barnyard was deserted, excepted for a few chickens that were huddled together in the shelter of a watering-trough, where the wind could not strike them. No barking dog came out to greet me and for a moment I feared that I had been misled and had come to a place where nobody lived. There was no other house to be seen for a mile, only the vast expanse of almost level land covered with the other-colored stubble of the last wheat crop. Half hidden in a faint haze to the eastward I could discern the village of Soledad and a cloud of dust marked the three miles of road over which I had just driven to the new Salvation Army colony.

I had to knock on the door several times before there was any response. Then it was opened wide.

"Certainly, come right in," said the young man who held the knob. "We're a little upset just now. Only got here yesterday, and as that was Sunday of course we did no work in the way of fixing up. Major Winchell is in the next room."

Then I looked about and saw why there were no signs of human beings on the outside of the house—the men were all busy on the inside. Some one was employed in each of the five rooms and working so hard as to be entirely oblivious of what was going on elsewhere. Five happy and contented men.

In the kitchen was Colonist Traver, investigating the mysteries of an oil stove. In one of the front rooms Major Winchell was working on his accounts. In the next room Civil Engineer Haskell was figuring on how the tract of land could be laid out so as to be utilized to the best advantage by the coming colonists. Captain Kisey and Colonist Gillespie were in the storeroom arranging the piles of provisions so that they could be easily obtained when wanted. And what a pile of good food there was.



GENERAL VIEW OF THE SALVATIONISTS' DOMAIN.

In less than a year this barren-looking piece of land will be covered with small farms and dwelling-houses. Major Winchell estimates that it will have a population of nearly four hundred. The chances are all will be prosperous and happy.

assure him \$250 next October. The Salvation Army may establish a market in San Francisco for the disposal of surplus produce. With such advantages I don't see why people cannot earn their living. If a man can save \$1.25 a week he can pay for his home within the time of our option to buy—ten years. When a man has paid for his land he will be given a clear title to it.

"There are to be no restrictions nor obligations on any of the colonists. We will have a store, but when a man draws against his account he is given coin, and can spend it where he pleases. There is to be no charity fund. People who cannot support themselves must go to some one of our other institutions. This is a place for workers.

"You have no idea of the class of people who apply to become colonists. Many of them have several hundred dollars laid by and are willing to make a good payment at the start. But we have to refuse them all, because this is for people who are not able to help themselves."

By this time we had driven around the colony tract and reached a point on the Mission ranch just back from the banks of the Rio Seco. Here there is a fine pumping plant and an abundance of water all the year around. The Salvation Army may buy this plant or make terms to have water supplied to their colony tract. They have several propositions under consideration, so that the water problem is an easy one. For domestic purposes it is the intention to put in a number of wind-mills along the roads through the ranch and connect with the houses by pipe. A perfect sewerage system will also be established.

When we got back to the ranch house three of the men were just ready to start plowing. Six horses were hitched to a double plow, and, when all was ready, off they went, tearing through the soil as if it were play. Actual farm work had commenced, although the colonists had been on their land less than forty-eight hours. Surely that is industry and enterprise.

"We are going to plow the whole thing except the roads, and we will build the houses on top of the plowed fields. This is simply a time-saving scheme, so that the land will be ready when the people come. Next year each man can plow his own land.

"We expect to commence building within the next ten days—just as soon as the lumber comes. All the houses will be alike in size and shape. There ought to be some families here inside of a month, and after that they will keep coming right along."



LOCATING THE FIRST CORNER.

Before the colonists had been on their land forty-eight hours Engineer Haskell had his transit at work and in a short time had located the first corner of one of the small farms.

There was not a stick of furniture in the house. Beds were made on the floor and boxes did duty for chairs and tables.

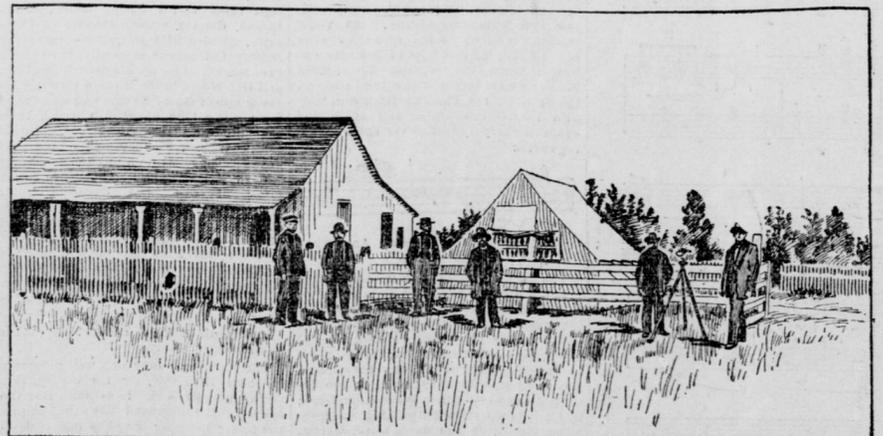
"We'll have all those things down in a day or two, when the other colonists come," Major Winchell explained. "Until then we will have to get along the best we know how. I think we have everything else we need."

"We haven't any baking powder," Colonist Traver put in at this point, "so we can't have any bread for dinner."

"Oh! yes we can," said the engineer. "Make Missouri cornbread. That don't need any baking powder. Only flour and water." All agreed that Missouri cornbread was good enough and so Missouri cornbread it was.

"Well, we couldn't be expected to remember everything," said Major Winchell. "We'll have everything we need in a few days."

As these five men proceeded with their work they impressed me as not realizing the importance of the undertaking they were starting. Here



SALVATIONISTS IN FRONT OF THEIR HOUSE.

When the colonists and officers arrived on the land they took up their quarters in an old farmhouse, where they will remain until other buildings are erected.

Colonist Gillespie had very little to say. He hardly seemed to realize the great change that had suddenly come to his way of living. But he was satisfied with his lot. "It is a beautiful piece of land," he said, "and I think the colony is going to be a big success. I am very proud of being one of the two first colonists."

"Come with me," Major Winchell said after he had laid out a number of little things to be attended to, "and I will show you our land and explain to you how we will improve it, and also how we may irrigate it."

The wind was not blowing now and the air was clear and warm. To the east and west high mountain ranges could be seen melting away in the blue distance. Truly it seemed like a paradise, and certainly a more desirable piece of farming land would be hard to find.

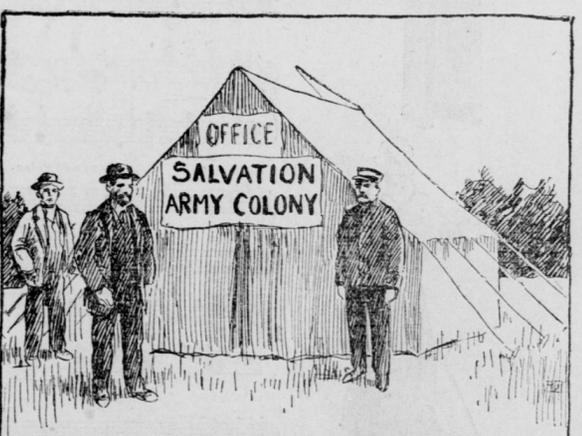
We left the ranch house where the colonists were domiciled and drove toward the west. The land sloped that way, but so gradually as to be hardly perceptible.

Just at the base of a range of foothills, sheltered from all wind and

"It is purely a business proposition. We are to have a sort of a bank. When the head of a certain family comes on the land he is given credit for from \$200 to \$250, according to the number of children. He is also given a house, barn, farming utensils and ten acres of land under water for irrigation. He really owes the Salvation Army the money he has been given credit for, and he has the privilege of buying the house and land at what both cost. He is treated as if they belonged to him.

"When a man moves into the colony and is located in his own house he has the privilege of drawing coin against his account. Now, if a man is industrious he ought not to need all of the money for which he is given credit before he gets returns.

"Those who get here before Christmas can get their land in such shape that they will be self-supporting almost from the start. They can plant alfalfa and keep a cow, and also a few pigs. There are accommodations for chickens in the barn. Vegetables can be grown from the start. Then besides each colonist can put five acres in sugar beets, which will



OFFICE OF THE COLONY.

Owing to lack of accommodations, the office of the colony has for the time being to be located in an old tent that for many moons has been in the service of the Salvation Army.

I then asked Major Winchell what the name of the colony was to be, to which he replied that it was not yet decided upon. "However," he said, "we will very likely make use of the popular word 'Santa' in the name. It has been suggested that we call it 'Santa Claus' colony, and I think we will. This will be appropriate on account of the time of year we will arrive, and it will also contain the name of our most liberal contributor."

"There will be lots of happy people here by Christmas time," continued Major Winchell, after a pause, "and I will then feel that our work is progressing properly. We will be raising human beings out of the slough of despond and giving them a home and hopes for the future. And I think that is a good deal better than starving in the city."

As I drove away from the colony tract I looked back and wondered how such a carefully planned, well backed and commendable enterprise could fall of success, and concluded that it will all depend on the colonists.