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# Gaming

**I**N 1848, WHILE the ink on the treaty that made California a part of the United States was still wet, the City Council of San Francisco passed a resolution regarding gambling. Heavy fines were fixed for parties arrested for gambling, while the authorities were authorized to "Seize for the benefit of the town all money found on gambling tables where cards are played."<sup>1</sup> Although this resolution was soon repealed, it illustrated a desire on the part of some San Francisco residents to keep gambling out of their city.

In spite of such desire, San Franciscans saw their city become one of the gambling centers of the west. For decades they saw its doors open to reckless miners who came to spend their gains in the great gaming saloons of the period. By 1852 reporters were noting that in the San Francisco area there were more places than ever "of dissipation and amusement, more tipping and swearing, more drunkenness and personal outrage."<sup>2</sup>

As part of San Francisco County, the Colma-Daly City area received a generous share of the gambling and the gambling houses. There were gaming tables, with cards and dice in nearly every bar that sprang up on Mission Street. Even grocery and dry good stores featured spots where games of every variety could be found.

After the creation of San Mateo County and again when vigilantes sought to redeem San Francisco, the gambling in San Mateo County developed on a still larger scale and so continued until one law after another—local or state—put a stop to it.

Related somewhat to the subject of gambling is that of horse racing. For Daly City this activity recalls the name of one of her greatest benefactors, John William Marchbank. Coming to San Francisco after a career as a miner and tavern owner in Alaska, Marchbank associated with San Francisco's richest men and, it is said, provided a place in Daly City for their gaming pleasure. It is reported, however, that he would let no Daly City resident gamble in his places.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after the end of World War I, he purchased Tanforan Race Track and is credited with bringing the race games and horse betting at tracks back to California after a provision killed horse racing in California.<sup>4</sup>

Sometime later he acquired ownership of the **Daly City Record** and published that newspaper for several years. On its pages he wrote his belief in America and of his hope for its greatness.

J. W. Marchbank gave Daly City the beautiful park that bears his name and contributed heavily to the public library. During the great depression of the 1930's he clothed and fed many needy Daly City families. It is reported that many homes were saved from foreclosure by Mr. Marchbank's generosity.

While engaged in Tanforan Race Track and in other activities, Mr. Marchbank built a motion picture theater where one of his road houses had been. The site is now occupied by the Starlite Market. Here he catered to children, even providing free popcorn and ice cream on special occasions.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps no other activity expresses the reason for Mr. Marchbank's philanthropy more than his concern for America's children. After years of presenting his long-remembered Christmas parties he wrote, "Young American men should know that this is a great land. It always has been and always will be a land of opportunity. Happiness and rich rewards are in store for the fellows who have energy and courage to work toward accomplishment."<sup>6</sup>



LEFT: BROADMOOR POLICE BOOKING GAMBLING SUSPECTS.

BELOW: THE OLD CAPITAL CAFE — SUPPOSEDLY USED FOR GAMES OF CHANCE.

