

Beckett's Walk Through Carlsbad's History

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Beckett the cat lived in a very nice house with his mother and sisters near Magee Park in Carlsbad. Curiosity was his biggest problem. He always wanted to know more about everything around him. When Beckett's mama told him and his sisters that they came from a long line of noble cats who used to live in the Shipley Magee House, Beckett had immediately wanted to know more about the house, and the people that had lived there. Mama told the kittens that one their ancestors known in the family simply as Grandfather had moved to Carlsbad with the Shipley Family in 1890. Beckett remembered hearing stories about this grandfather moving to Carlsbad when he was a kitten and all of the exciting adventures he had living in the new town.



So one day while his mama and sisters were snoozing in the sun, curiosity over took Beckett's better judgment, he slipped out of his garden without telling his mama and made his way to the old house in Magee Park. Once he arrived at the Shipley Magee house on Beech Street he sat underneath the eucalyptus trees and just stared at the house, trying to figure out a way inside. Beckett knew from the family stories that the eucalyptus trees were over 100 years old and had been planted by the town founders to mark where they wanted the roads to be built.

Beckett snooped all around the outside of the house looking for an entrance. He tried climbing onto a windowsills, but kept falling off.

Finally after sliding down the sloped cellar door and landing on the sidewalk he noticed a very small house nearby. Since Beckett was a cat with superior smell, he recognized this was what Grandfather called an outhouse. An outhouse was a small building that looked like a little house and was used only as a toilet. In the early days of the city there was no inside plumbing or toilets. People needed to go outside to these little houses to use the bathroom. All of the water used in the house was either pumped from a well or brought collected from rain water stored in the cistern next to the barn. A cistern was a large tank used to store water.



After discovering the outhouse Beckett continued looking for a way into the Shipley Magee house. At last he saw a car pull up in front and park. A friendly looking woman got out. Beckett knew that she worked at the Historical Society Museum inside the Shipley Magee House.

The woman was a docent, which means that she told visitors all about the things inside the museum and the people who use to live there and in Carlsbad. Beckett hoped she would tell stories about his Grandfather Cat. The Docent hung bright flags outside on the porch railings and opened the front door to the house. When her back was turned, Beckett dashed into the house and hid under one of the sofas in the living room. A short time later visitors arrived and Beckett listened as the Docent told stories about the house and the Shipley Family who use to live there and why they came to Carlsbad.

Exhausted by listening to the stories and his adventures Beckett dozed off for a much needed nap. When Beckett woke up the Docent was gone and the front door was locked. Beckett was locked inside of the house all alone! Since the house was quiet, he decided to explore on his own and satisfy his curiosity. Maybe he could find out more about Grandfather and his family.



One of the first things Beckett saw was a painting of Florence Shipley Magee astride a horse. He remembered that Grandfather Cat knew Florence Shipley Magee as a young girl and that she loved to ride horses and loved all sorts of animals. In fact Grandfather had been one of Florence's little kittens. Beckett remembered the exciting story about Grandfather's arrival in Carlsbad with the

Shipley family. The Shipley family, Florence's dog Juno and grandfather, all traveled together on the train looking for a nice place to live. The train stopped in Oceanside because the train tracks were flooded from all of the rain.



Mr. Shipley decided to rent a horse and buggy while the family was stuck in Oceanside waiting for the flooded tracks to clear. The family set off to explore all around the area hoping to find a place to live.



Grandfather had bounced along in the buggy with Juno looking at the dirt roads, hitching posts, wooden sidewalks, and wide open spaces. Mr. and Mrs. Shipley discovered a cute little house near the beach and decided it would be a great place to live. So they bought it and they all moved in.



Beckett peeked out the bedroom window and saw the big wooden barn where buggies, wagons and horses were kept. He knew that on the barn floor a gravestone with the name "Juno" was kept as a reminder of Florence's beloved dog and Grandfather's best friend. Beckett remembered the stories of how important dogs, cats, and horses were in everyday life. Dogs helped protect the chickens and other animals and people that lived in and near the barn. Cats protected the hay and straw from mice eating all the horse and people food. Horses were the cars, tractors, and delivery trucks in Grandfather's day.



Trains were very important also, because they brought people, crops and other materials came from very far away. All of the mail came to Carlsbad on the 3:30 pm. train. People who lived on ranches and farms came downtown around 4 pm to pick up their mail, visit with friends, and do any shopping. One important thing people liked to buy was Kerosene. It was an important purchase because it was used for lamps and for heating and was even placed in cans that the bedposts stood in to keep the fleas out of the sheets.



When Grandfather first arrived in town, Carlsbad had only dirt roads, and just one was lined with wooden sidewalks and hitching posts to tie up the horses. There was one general store, Simpsons' and it was the place to shop. Grandfather Cat often wandered there to watch the people buy hardware, dry goods and some groceries.

There was no bank, but Mark Coffin's feed store had a safe where Mr. Shipley and others kept their money. The Geib lumberyard stored all the wood brought by train for building houses, churches and other buildings. It was right next to the train tracks. A blacksmith was also located downtown. A blacksmith made and repaired lots of things in iron that horses, buggies and wagons needed. The blacksmith's shop was quiet and had hay in the stalls for horses. This made it a nice place for cats to nap. Grandfather Cat liked Carlsbad better when it was just the horses.

The farm wagons would come to town loaded with produce to transport on the trains. Beans, figs, squash, strawberries, corn, avocados, passion fruit and flowers were some of the things inside the crates loaded onto the trains. The train station had a storage section where farmers could back their wagons up to ramps and unload their produce. The farmers' crops were delivered to packing sheds and shipped all over the country. Children often worked for farmers, building packing boxes, weeding, picking crops and watering the fields in their time off from school.



Children only went to school seven months. One of the first teachers was Mrs. Hattie Reece Schutte and she taught all of the grades in the two-story school house. When Florence Shipley, Grandfather's little girl, started school

there were only 36 pupils and Grandfather Cat was certain to be at the school during recess. The children played games like hopscotch, and sometimes they danced. A favorite was the Virginia Reel and Grandfather kept time with his tail, since he was a musical cat.

Beckett remembered stories of Grandfather Cat attending all of the parties in town. Often Grandfather would hide under the seat of a horse and buggy leaving St. Michael's church, which was down the street from the Shipley Magee House. He especially liked to ride in the Ramsay family buggy, because they often had people over to their house for card parties, dances or luncheons. Florence and her mother Mrs Shipley liked to visit with the Ramsay Family. The ladies sat on the back porch at the Ramsay house and watched the children dance on the weekends as records played on the Victrola. Grandfather had a special friend, Mouser Ramsay, whom he visited with when he was tired of watching the children dance. Mouser and Grandfather played among the apricot, fig, and plum trees and if they were lucky, they would beg some of the party food from the guests. There was always plenty of cakes, sandwiches, cookies and lemonade.



Sometimes people made plans to meet at the packing shed near the train tracks for dances. Grandfather Cat loved these dances. People dressed in their best clothes and came from farms and ranches. The ladies would decorate the inside of the packing shed with flowers from the local growers and provide sumptuous dinners.

Grandfather Cat was usually so tired after these parties that he spent the next day snoozing in the shade of some sea lavender on the ocean bluffs. Occasionally, he was awakened by shouts of children playing on the beach, fisherman, or tourists setting up their tents along the bluffs. Camping seemed primitive compared to the comforts of his the Shipley home. Grandfather Cat always said he knew he was a fortunate cat, because his owners had a house. Lots of people had to live in tents when they first arrived in Carlsbad because there weren't enough houses.

As time went on, Grandfather Cat, Juno the dog and even Florence had to be careful crossing the streets, because more people and cars were arriving in Carlsbad to work on the farms and downtown.

The city became busy. Los Diego Hotel built. Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Killian put up brick buildings for stores and offices. Wooden sidewalks were replaced with concrete ones and a grocery store was opened.



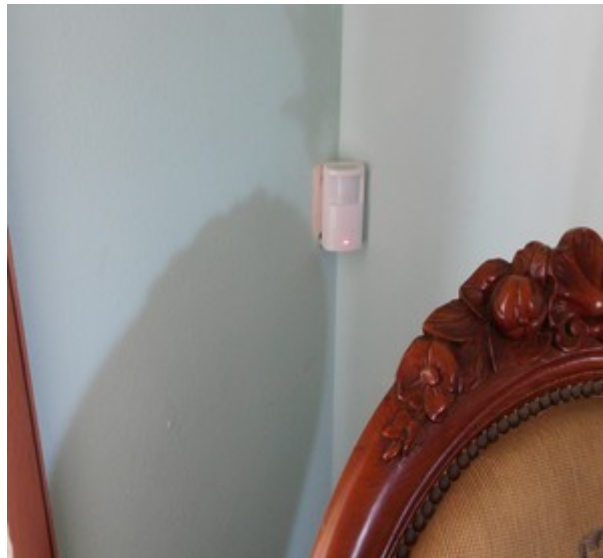


Finally Beckett's curiosity took him into the kitchen, where he checked out the green and white gas stove and the big wooden work table filed with cooking utensils. He remembered that Grandfather Cat told stories about being underfoot in the kitchen when groceries were delivered, begging for a snack.

Later Grandfather would refresh himself by lapping up cold water that dripped from the block of melting ice inside the large oak ice box. Beckett was sad because he discovered there was not a scrap of food in sight, and he was hungry. What a disappointing kitchen!



Beckett decided to continue his exploration in the rest of the house. He wandered into the living room and there curiosity trapped the cat. Beckett jumped on top of the needle pointed sofa. He saw a blinking read light on the wall and pawed at it. A very loud security alarm sounded and scared Beckett. He dove under a chair.



In a short while the police arrived and while they were searching for a burglar, Beckett quietly crept out the door when they weren't looking . He ran home to his mama and sisters.

Mama missed Beckett and was so happy to see him that she washed him carefully all over until he fell asleep. And while he slept he dreamed of a beautiful lady riding a tall horse and a dog named Juno running alongside.