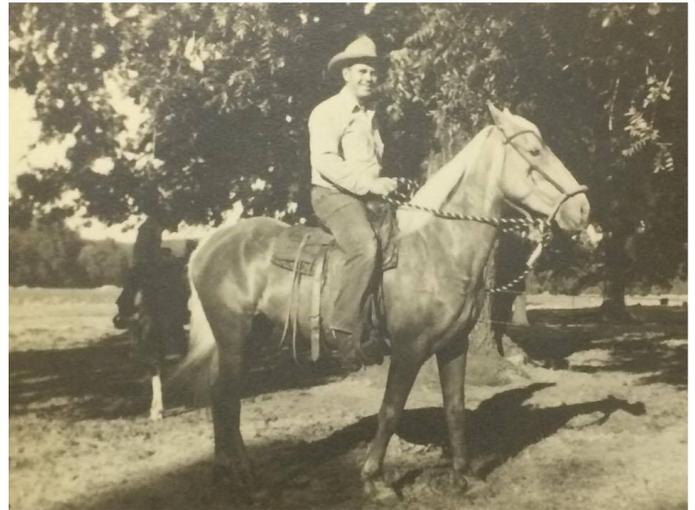


2017 Middletown Days Grand Marshal

The Parker family



Emil Parker

Ma (Hettie Parker), Minnie Cannon, Edna Parker, Emil Parker & Johnny Parker on the floor

“Who are the Parkers?” you may ask. Well, you could be standing next to one or next to the friend of a Parker right now. Perhaps their last name is different, but if asked, they could proudly state the Parker’s were their grand, great grand, or great-great grandparents.

Emil and Edna Parker had eight children: Lillian, Virginia, William, Roberta (Bertie), Lila, Doris, Emily, and John. Five of the six girls went on to have children of their own...these are the names you are most likely familiar with Piper, Van Leuven, Williams, Knight, Morales, Washington or McCosker.

When asked how the Parkers helped with Central Park the response given was, “There would be no Middletown Central Park if it weren’t for Emil.” The story goes Lake County was gearing up to celebrate its centennial. When trying to decide where to hold it, Emil remembered there were five acres that had been donated to the people of Middletown right where the park is now.

After some clarification from the county and paperwork, the people of Middletown held the deed to what is now Middletown Central Park.

Emil Parker was born August 2, 1896 in Long Valley to John Parker and Hattie (Ozenberger) Parker. Emil grew up on his family's farm and attended Middletown School. Edna was born May 25, 1898 in Kentucky. Edna came to California to visit her aunt and met Emil in Middletown. The two were married Valentine's Day 1917, settled in to Long Valley, and had their first daughter in 1918.

Emil's aunt was Mrs. Minnie Cannon who built the first grocery store, where the old Boar's Breath building stands, with her husband Robert. The rock the building is made from came from Emil and Edna's Long Valley Ranch. Emil and Edna later moved to Main Street in Middletown until Emil's parents bought the Parker Ranch in the 1930s (currently known as Diamond D). They worked the farm, ran the cattle, lived off the land, and raised their family on that ranch until it was sold around 1946. They then bought a ranch in Ashland, Oregon but returned to Middletown not long after. After a brief stay in Healdsburg they bought their last ranch on Dry Creek Road (now owned by the Gough Family) in the late 1950s.

Emil was known as the unofficial town vet. No matter the time of night whether dog, horse or calf; Emil would grab his black bag and head out the door to help whomever was in need. Even if he was up all night, he'd return home and be ready to tend to the ranch responsibilities.

Before there was an arena in Middletown, he would gather the town kids and their horses before the sun came up and ride to Lower Lake to drive a bucking string to Pope Valley for the rodeo. They would stay all day, work and ride in the rodeo, and then drive the horses back to Lower Lake making almost a 24-hour day out of it before getting back home to Middletown.

His birthday was always the opening day of hunting season and it became tradition for people from all over to stay the night before. They would wake up bright and early and Emil would set the guys on stands, run the dogs and guide countless successful hunts.

Teachers from Middletown High School would bring their students out to the ranch for field trips. Much was taught and experienced on those trips but the one most often remembered, or more appropriately scarred into the memories of the students, was when Emil taught the kids to castrate the sheep and cattle by using his teeth. His surviving daughter, Lila Lee, still cringes with embarrassment at the memory. He's remembered as being extremely tough, full of wisdom, a great story teller, and having a comedian's sense of humor.

Edna was a woman with a heart of gold and an undeniable amount of wisdom and strength. She cooked, cleaned, birthed eight babies (some at home), raised all her own food, had her own smokehouse, canned for the winter, made homemade sausage, embraced this new to her, little town as her own, and gave love to each new face that walked through the door. You see, the Parker's home never once had a locked door. In fact, the Parkers never knew a stranger. Every Thanksgiving and Christmas, Edna would fix a plate for anyone in town that did not have a

family, and Emil would drive around delivering them. If someone was passing through town or needed a place to stay, they ended up at the Parker table. And, whenever one of the town boys would return home from the service, Edna would plan a big party to welcome him back.

Somehow, Edna even managed to find time to work a one year stint for the Middletown grammar school as a janitor. Lila remembers because her and her sisters had to help.

Edna also had a knack with animals and was known for her ability to save dogs from rattlesnake bites. To much of her family's dismay, she raised pet skunks. "Every once in a while, Grandma would come inside smelling like skunk and you'd know one of them sprayed her again," recalls her grandson, Emil Van Leuven.

Sometimes, Emil would drive in to town to pick up ice from the ice house so Edna could make ice cream. Well, everyone in town knew what it meant when he bought 7 lbs of ice. "Someone would always conveniently be out on a Sunday drive and just happen to stop by...we were the last house on a dead-end road. Never made much sense, but Momma gave them ice cream," recalls Lila.

Emil and Edna were an outgoing couple who loved to help wherever they could. They were both involved in starting the old Grange off of Grange Road. The Grange was a community center for farmers where countless meetings and Saturday night events were held. And, they both had a hand in helping build Central Park and making Middletown Days a tradition. In fact, Edna won first place in the very first Middletown Days Parade with her horse and buggy.

Emil and Edna Parker loved their community and put their heart and soul into this town. They left a legacy that has been passed on to each of their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. As many of you know, much of the family is still around and carrying on the traditions Emil and Edna started. Thank you to both Emil and Edna for helping make Middletown what it is today and for giving so many people memories to look back on and smile.

Lila Lee, the last of the 8 siblings, proudly represents the Parker's this Middletown Days.