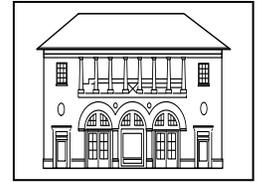


THE JOURNAL OF LOCAL HISTORY

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The Archives Committee of the Redwood City Public Library
1044 Middlefield Road, Redwood City, CA 94063

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The President's Message

This is the second issue of the "Journal of Local History." If you received the first issue you are part of the Archives Committee of the Redwood City Public Library. For those who are receiving the journal for the first time, you are a member of the Union Cemetery Association.

To all of you, a happy welcome.

The recession has affected all of us in one way or another and it has been very hard on the Redwood City Library. It was announced that the local history room will probably be closed unless brainstorming sessions in the near future can work out an equitable solution. This will be a hardship on all of us who do historical research. It may be opened one or two afternoons by volunteers and other than that by appointment. We'll see.

Union Cemetery is in good shape although the drought has affected some of the roses, most of them are in fairly good condition. We have tried to be careful with our use of water. September 19th was Redwood City's fall cleanup and a group of people came to the cemetery to clean up.

The President's Message continued

I brought six new, old type roses and Parks and Rec. has provided two shovels. By the end of the morning we had six more, very large roses which will prove to be very colorful as time goes on. Of course I am aware that you will receive this well after this event.

Remember, the Union Cemetery Association meets at City Hall on the 4th Monday of each month except July and December and usually May because of Memorial Day. People wishing to petition the board to assist in the process in any way are invited to join us on those Monday nights. The Archives Board meets on either the second or third Thursday of each month depending on availability of meeting space in the library. We love to have people join us and if you call me (593-1793) I will be able to tell you which day it is for that month.

John G. Edmonds, President

The Fox–Thorpe Families

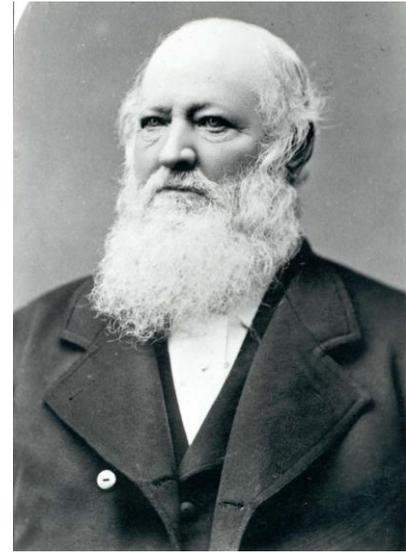
By John Edmonds

I have already written about Benjamin Fox and his sons, Charles and George. Their stories are in my book about Union Cemetery. I have learned so much more about these families from Clare Thorpe that, because of the combining of the Fox and Thorpe families, it was more than a little necessary to repeat some of the original book. The story of Fayette Thorpe may also be found in the more recent and improved copy of the cemetery book.



Betsy Crane Fox

Benjamin F. Fox married Elizabeth (Betsy) Crane in Wayne County, Michigan where he was an attorney who became a judge and a member of the legislature in the Michigan State Capital. Wayne County was close to the edge of the civilized world at that time. Benjamin and Betsy raised a family and left for California in the late spring of 1850. They arrived at the Sierra Nevada and began crossing as the snow fell. They traveled over the same route that the ill fated Donner Party did later. They faced drifts that became higher and colder, causing several in their party to give up and die.



The Honorable Judge Benjamin Fox

Benjamin and Betsy made it to California the following year and Benjamin returned to Michigan to bring the rest of the family out. The oldest son Charles, who had married Ms. Lucy Taylor in Michigan, the sixth son George, Benjamin Jr. and Chet with the daughters Sarah Elizabeth (now Quigley), Nan (now Palmer) and Harriet, who was a very frail child; all made it through, eventually to Redwood City. The Quigley family settled in Plumas County and the Palmer family ended up in Monterey County.

Benjamin Fox became San Mateo County's first judge in 1856 when the county was established. He played a major role in preventing the fledgling county from becoming a criminal's plaything through the stuffed ballot election that began the separation from San Francisco County. Charles Fox became an attorney in San Mateo County after developing a substantial amount of success at this occupation in Michigan before traveling west. George Fox also became an Attorney and was the District Attorney of San Mateo County for a period of time. He also had been a Deputy Sheriff prior to that.

Benjamin Fox Jr. joined company G of the First California Cavalry during the Civil War and went east against the Confederates:

chasing them through Arizona, New Mexico and back into Texas where they succeeded in gaining a surrender from the secessionists. Chester, also known as Chet, was an employee of the Northern Pacific Express Company and, for a while, worked in San Quentin Prison.

In 1859 Charles N. Fox was commissioned by the Governor as a notary public. He had his office in the courthouse in which his father was the superior court judge.



Charles Fox

Charles was appointed to the position of District Attorney and held that position for five years. Following that he was employed by the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad Company and later, the Southern Pacific Railroad Company. He was appointed then to the position of Assistant Justice of the California Supreme Court. He left that position after fulfilling his commitment and became the attorney for the Spring Valley Water Company.

During 1863, while the Civil War was fully engaged, George Fox, after his stint as District Attorney, became a sergeant in the Jefferson Rifles. This was a military unit, company "H" of the 1st California Cavalry. This was a group of dedicated citizens who prepared themselves to block the Confederate troops if and when they came up through Redwood City to get to San Francisco. There was substantial evidence that the Confederates intended to do just that.

George Winthrop Fox was highly recognized as one of California's finest attorneys. He was especially popular in Redwood City as he was well known and very friendly with everybody he met. He handled some highly published cases in the courthouse. One especially stands out in my mind and that is of his defense for Mr. Sullivan who shot to death a San Francisco rapist who raped his daughter at the Belmont Picnic Grounds. The shooting occurred in the courtroom during preliminary hearing.



George Fox

The public felt strongly that the rapist got what he deserved, but Judge Buck had no choice but to take him into custody. George Fox convinced the judge that Mr. Sullivan was temporarily insane, a finding the public accepted. Sullivan was released and never offended again.

The Times-Gazette Newspaper, a paper that George often wrote articles and obituaries in, had an exceptional article at his death, which was unexpected as he was up and around the day before. "George Fox was looked upon as an able attorney and possessed oratorical ability that was far above the ordinary."

A good story about George was in the newspaper on October 25, 1884, "George Fox was over on the coast a few days ago endeavoring to persuade the people to vote for him for Superior Court Judge.

We don't know how he succeeded in getting votes but quite a curiosity occurred when he walked away with an abalone shell with a small child's foot and shoe encased in it. (This is a substantially larger article that I reduced for the sake of brevity.)



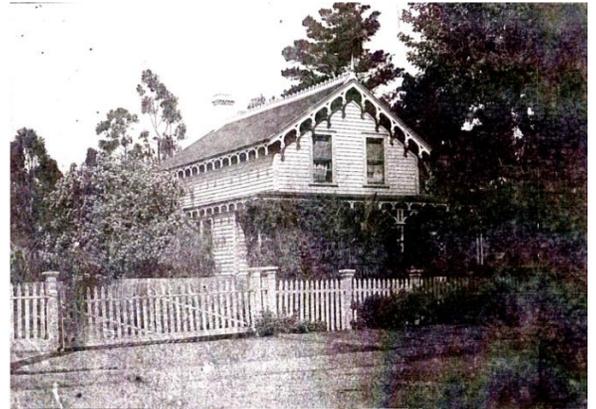
*Mrs. George Fox
Sarah Thornton Donald*

It is reported that a woman and small child were drowned off the coast about seven years before and it is supposed that the foot is that of the child."

George Fox married Sarah Thornton Donald in San Francisco after eloping from her Belmont home. They followed this with a religious wedding in her father's home. Sarah was a beautiful vivacious young lady of eighteen years when George married her. She had beautiful flaming red hair which cascaded down over her shoulders and she was very proud of her hair. She refused to wear a cap when most women of the day did so. She finally gave into this custom when she reached her 35th birthday.

Sarah had traveled by stage to Santa Clara for her education and thus knew the stage stops well, especially the stage stop on Main Street in Redwood City. She was very impressed by that stage stops' beautiful house. George bought it for her and they moved into the house that was just a short distance from the American House on Main Street at Bridge Street.

Sarah operated the stage business while George was able to walk easily to his office in the Germania Hall on A Street. George and Sarah had six children, actually eight but two were still born. Claudius (Claude) was born October 13, 1867, Parker was born in 1868, Zoe on January 15, 1870, Charles (Carl) in the 1870s, Ethyl on October 14, 1877 and Beatrice (Bee) November 17, 1880.



George Fox Family Home on Main Street

There was a great deal of travel between Redwood City and Oakland where Charles was living and was practicing law. There were also visits from Benjamin Jr. who traveled from Texas. These visits continued even after Betsy Fox died.

The Fox family added on to the stage stop as the number of children grew. The amount of stages running gradually thinned out and the emphasis on life in the house at 314 Main Street became a very social one. Many community meetings were held there as well as birthday parties. There were lodge parties and picnics. George loved to take the children to the theater and many theatrical events were held at Germania Hall on A Street.

Zoe Fox married Fayette H. Thorpe on December 17, 1892. Mr. Thorpe had come to this area from his native Tennessee with a dream of becoming an attorney and in a short period of time was successful in reaching that goal. Unfortunately Fayette became ill after becoming an attorney and the great pain in his stomach resulted in surgery in a sanitarium in San Francisco and he never left the hospital. His death left his wife in a difficult situation. She relied on her music training and ability and went into teaching music.



Fanny Hughes, Nellie Cloud and Zoe Fox

The marriage of Fayette and Zoe produced a number of children among which was Winthrop Henry Thorpe. Winthrop, known as “Bud” became a Redwood City police officer and promoted to sergeant. During the Second World War he was the city’s air raid and civil defense warden.



Fayette Thorpe

Following the war he continued in his position in the police department while studying for his degree in law. But one can gain a real understanding of this special man, from a brief essay in the Redwood City Tribune.

Here’s a bouquet to the Redwood City police, in the form of a letter which was sent to the Tribune by a student of Stanford University: “Editor Tribune – A newly arrived citizen of Redwood City wishes to commend the police for their courtesy. When local officers were searching the town for a burglar recently, he (the citizen) was stopped and questioned as a loitering stranger. But there was directness and courtesy in one of the police that astonished the man. He feels that he should be proud to have a police force that is decent and gentlemanly and at the same time be efficient.” (Unfortunately there was no date on the article)

Early in Bud’s career as a police officer he was badly injured when returning to his car. As he was about to enter the car another motorist came around the corner and struck him inflicting what appeared to be a very bad injury. He was taken to the hospital where doctors worked on him immediately and found that the injury was not nearly as bad as it appeared. Bud was back to work after a period of rehabilitation.



Bud Thorpe

Winthrop Henry (Bud) Thorpe married Mary Evelyn Whitfield at Bride’s Ranch at Mission San Jose on February 8th, 1930. While working as a police officer Bud was studying law and he took and passed the bar and went into private practice. He soon became the city attorney for Redwood City.

Later in life, when the new Hall of Justice was built on Bradford Street in Redwood City Bud Thorpe became the law librarian. The law library was on the 3rd floor in the southwest corner of the building. It was in this capacity that I became acquainted with Bud. While I never had any inkling to becoming an attorney, I did like to go into the library and do some research from time to time on cases I became involved in while working patrol in the Sheriff's Office. All my experiences involving Bud were very pleasant and he was always very helpful.



George and Claire Thorpe

The member of the Thorpe family that I knew best however, was George Thorpe, Bud's son. George joined the Sheriff's Office shortly after I did and we had the opportunity to work together on a number of occasions. George was very patient and was well liked by all the deputies. I don't remember George getting involved physically with people in the process of making an arrest. I am sure that he did on a rare occasion as it was impossible not to in some situations. George Thorpe married Clare M. Pors on September 10, 1960 at the Carmel Mission in Carmel, California. This union developed into the birth of Kevin George Thorpe on September 28, 1962. Kevin married Stephanie Quinteros on March 23, 1985.



Kevin and Stephanie Thorpe

I must express my sincere appreciation for the extensive amount of help Clare Thorpe has been for this biography. Without her help I would not have several of these pictures and much of the knowledge to complete this family history. Her loan of the diaries and journals of George Fox and Fayette Thorpe have been invaluable for looking at the character and personalities of these wonderful gentlemen.

Pioneer Churches of San Mateo County

By James O. Clifford, Sr.

Circuit-riding preachers or sandal-wearing padres spring from history's database when one conjures images of those who brought religion to the frontier, but it was not a member of the clergy who built the first church in San Mateo County. That honor goes to Irish immigrant Dennis Martin, a man whose life story reads like a movie script.

Among other things, Martin, who came West in 1844 in the first wagon train to cross the Sierra, gained fame for his daring rescue of stranded 17-year-old Moses Schallenberger near what would eventually be named Donner Lake.



Nativity Church

He went on to become a successful lumberman, owned land that today is part of the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, and took a beating in the legal fights over land grants. He died broke trying to pay off debts that stemmed from that battle. (For more about Martin see “The Town of Searsville” in an earlier issue.)

In between, he established St. Denis Church near what was then Searsville: no, not the present church in Sharon Heights. That one was built in 1963. Martin put up the first St. Denis in 1853, about a mile from today’s church.

“Perhaps no contemporary church in the archdiocese has such a fascinating background as St. Denis,” wrote Jane Knoerle, author of a history of the parish written in 1978 for the 125th anniversary of St. Denis.

Before he built the little structure, there was no Catholic church between Mission Dolores in San Francisco and Mission Santa Clara. Martin, who usually went to Santa Clara or invited missionary priests to stay at his home where they said Mass, decided to build the church for his family, neighbors and his lumber workers.

He took a vacant, redwood schoolhouse he had built and expanded it into the shape of a cross.

Records of pew rents in the rustic church show regular attendance of 50 families, many of them walking from as far as Redwood City, the history stated. In 1862, Father James Motter, personal secretary to Archbishop Joseph Alemany, set up regular visitations for San Mateo County. One Sunday he’d officiate at St. Denis, the next in San Mateo, then Redwood City and last in Spanishtown, the name Americans gave to the former village of San Benito and what is today Half Moon Bay.

Martin’s church, which also included a cemetery where the first burial was that of Martin’s father, was abandoned in 1872 and eventually torn down. There were some 45 burials with Dennis Martin being the last.

A writer for the San Mateo Times and Gazette visited the empty church in the 1880s, describing it as “grim and deserted in the midst of green fields, its walls weather-beaten and bare from the storms. The altar, once decorated with the handsomest of drapes and flowers, is soiled and stained by rain. Though the place is neglected and the doors always open, no one has disturbed a single article in the church.”

In researching the history of St. Denis, the Rev. John S. Cummins wrote that the altar was “richly draped and adorned with six silver candlesticks and a crucifix hand wrought in France, then taken to Rome, where, legend has it, they were blessed by Pope Pius IX.”

The artifacts are on display today at Nativity Church in Menlo Park, which has been nicknamed the “Roaming Catholic Church” - and with good reason.

Dedicated as a small chapel in 1872 and originally called St. Bridgit’s, the structure soon wasn’t big enough for the fast-growing parish. More land was needed so in 1878 the 40x55 foot building was placed on log rollers, moved to another spot and then, a year later, to the present site on Oak Grove Avenue where it was enlarged into a church typical of a time when both wood and skilled workers were plentiful. Nativity follows the Gothic pattern of so many churches of the era, the New England style that featured pointed arches, buttresses and pinnacles.

The white redwood church that boasts brilliant stained glass windows and hand-carved side altars is surrounded by lawns, along with palm and oak trees. It also has a 1,200-pound bell donated in the 1880s by Peter Donohue, the “Iron King” who founded the Union Iron Works that built many famous ships, including the USS Olympia, Dewey’s flagship at Manila Bay. The church was placed on the National Register of Historical Places in 1981.

Rabbi Jay Miller of the Peninsula Clergy Network cautioned about the use of “churches.” Miller sent this publication a list of “congregations” in the area. For the purpose of the article, “church” usually means the physical structure. After all, the original inhabitants of the county may have held services as a “congregation” and so did the Spanish and Mexican settlers.

The county’s first Jewish congregation, Temple Beth Jacob, now in Redwood City, celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2005. In 2003, Louise Henriques Mann wrote a book called “The Mishpukah: Growing up Jewish in Early Palo Alto.” She reported that by 1927 there were 25 families in the congregation but no building. The first service, she wrote, was “held in the living room of the Entens, one of the founding member families.” The first temple, on Creek Drive in Menlo Park, served the Jewish community from 1933 to 1953.

Early Christian congregations also faced the problem of lack of a structure. The courthouse was a popular and ecumenical place to hold services until a church was built. In the early years, newspapers notified the community when services would be held in the courthouse. In 1861 the San Mateo Gazette reported that “for the first time” Redwood City would have a resident minister, the Rev. J. S. Zelig. This, the Gazette added, “was well worthy of notice.” Zelig held services in the courthouse following Mass by Father Benedict Picardi.

Zelig led the First Congregational Church, which, appropriately, was the first Protestant congregation in San Mateo County.

The minister, his wife and ten other people met in a second floor room of the courthouse and founded the church at a time when Redwood City had a population of about 250.

In 1863 Congregationalists built the first church in Redwood City at Middlefield Road and Jefferson Avenue.

The church followed the New England Gothic pattern popular at the time, but in this case the architecture represented more than fashion.

“Our congregational heritage is rooted in New England where the Pilgrims and Puritans established the freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences,” the church website points out.

In 1922 a new yellow brick church was erected on the site, which served the faithful until the 1950s when new facilities were opened at McGarvey and Euclid. A chapel and an education wing were dedicated in 1954 and the sanctuary three years later. The new church became known as the church “on the rock” because of the large outcropping of natural rock, which was incorporated into the structure itself. The church became the Redwood Baptist Church in 2007.

The Rev. Giles Easton held the county’s first Episcopalian service on April 10, 1864 in the courthouse. The original Episcopal church was built in 1867, also on Jefferson. Dubbed the “little red church,” it was torn down in 1931 after a new church on Brewster replaced it in 1926.

If you want to see a church from pioneer days go to Heller and Elm in Redwood City. The wooden-frame structure with the peaked roof has sheltered many denominations, starting with the Baptists who dedicated the small church in 1874 to care for 22 members. In 1930 the Baptists moved to a new church at Hudson and James.

The Heller church went on to serve Methodists and Pentecostals and Roman Catholics, today as a mission church of St. Anthony’s parish in Menlo Park. Earlier, it was a mission of Mount Carmel. According to a history of Redwood City churches that appeared in the Redwood City Tribune, a Methodist church was built in Redwood City in “1864 or 1865” but it was said “to have blown down.” A Methodist church measuring 32 feet by 40 feet was dedicated in 1873 on Maple Street. The congregation moved to the present Methodist church at Broadway and Brewster in 1925.

Simple as it is, the church on Elm is an outstanding example of the aforementioned Early Gothic Revival, an architectural style that dominated the 1840s-1870s, according to a booklet published by the Historic Resources Advisory Committee of Redwood City.

“It has a number of key features—the center steeple, lancet windows, rectilinear and arched label moldings and the quoins (wood blocks stacked to resemble masonry) at all four corners,” the booklet said. The committee noted that the church was built at the end of the popularity of the style, thus concluding that the time lapse showed “how slow the transmission of styles was to distant California.”

According to a history of the church, the first pastor, the Rev. A. Kollner, had experience in construction and got the work started.

“Carpenters were hired to do the job, and the evidence of their excellent craftsmanship can still be seen in the old church building,” it said.

One reason the Baptists moved out was that the church was so close to the railroad tracks it shook every time a train went past, noted the Rev. Charles Gatchell who was 100 years old when he spoke in 1967 on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the congregation. It was Gatchell who led the drive in 1930 to build the new church at Hudson and James. Gatchell was interviewed at his century mark by a newspaper writer who asked him about his 75 years as a minister.

“I haven’t made a lot of money, but I’ve made a lot of friends, and that’s worth more than money,” the clergyman answered.

Next stop on our trip to the past is the coastal town of Pescadero, which is a virtual time tunnel. We’ll then go up the coast, come back to El Camino, where the padres once walked, and return to Redwood City.

Pescadero has two churches dating to the 1860s, and, like almost everything in the small town, are within walking distance of each other. Both churches are in the same style as the Heller Street church in Redwood City. The Pescadero Community Church built in 1867 boasts that it is “the oldest surviving Protestant church on the San Francisco Peninsula still on its original foundation.”

The church, topped by a bell tower added in 1890, was named a California Historical Landmark in 1984. It reflects “the New England background of many of Pescadero’s settlers,” said Phyllis Neumann, author of “Pescadero: A California Coastal Town.”

So does the other church: St. Anthony’s, which was completed in 1868 to serve the Catholic community and is just around the corner from Pescadero Community.

Also just around the corner is the Mt. Hope-St. Anthony’s Cemetery, located about a quarter mile north of town on Stage Road. Mourners still take part in processions in which they follow the coffin from either Pescadero Community Church or St. Anthony’s up the hill to the cemetery where burials started in the 1860s.

St. Anthony’s is a mission church of Our Lady of the Pillar parish in Half Moon Bay, at 500 square miles the largest parish in the San Francisco Archdiocese.

The original church of Our Lady of the Pillar, also built in 1868, was a frame building that was destroyed by fire in 1875. The bell from the first church was moved to both the second church, which lasted from 1883 to 1954, and the present structure. The current church has a large glass enclosure at the entrance that contains some of the stained glass windows from the 1883 church.

Half Moon Bay is also home to the Community United Methodist Church, built in 1872, again in the Gothic Revival architectural style. However, the church belfry is unlike spires in other Peninsula churches of the period in that it has an octagonal cupola with cutout braces in the four arch openings.

The Redwood City Democrat reported on May 10, 1906 that “the Methodist Church was thrown from its foundation and badly wrecked” in the Great San Francisco Earthquake. Rebuilt the next year and a new bell added, the church interior was “so thoroughly renovated . . . it would hardly be recognized,” the paper reported. Originally facing west, the church was turned to face 90 degrees to face south. In 2000, the building was turned to look west once again in preparation for building an adjacent new church dedicated in 2002.

There are two aisles in the sanctuary of the old church because men and women were not allowed to sit together when the church was built.

The original divided pews are still in use. The “bundling board,” which separated the genders, was removed from the pews during a recent renovation, but a “hue and cry” from the congregation brought them back, the church website reported. For weddings, the bride enters through the north door or “women’s side” but the couple departs through the “men’s side.”

Let’s move over to San Mateo, where the Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, celebrated its 140th Birthday in 2004. The first members of the church met in a school house. In 1864, when San Mateo was a mere village. A group of ten established the church with the Rev. J.H. Warren as pastor. The first church, a frame building, was dedicated in January of 1869 and used for more than 50 years until the completion of a new sanctuary in 1923. The present church followed in 1931 and the earlier structure became a social hall.

Peggy Caldwell recalled the first church in recollections she wrote in 1984 at the time of the celebration of the church’s 120th birthday.

“I was 12 years old when I joined the church in 1917,” she said. One day it was decided that the pews needed painting and the paint wasn’t dry by Sunday. There were some sticky seats!”

San Mateo, which means Saint Matthew in Spanish, has two churches named for that saint. The first was the Roman Catholic St. Matthew, a little wood-steepled church where the first Mass was held in 1863.

The congregation increased rapidly and in 1900 a larger and fire-resistant brick church was dedicated. The present St. Matthew, one of the first post-Vatican II churches, was dedicated on May 8, 1966. Circular in design, and a sharp contrast to those early Gothic churches, the building was meant “to reflect the changes in the liturgy and foster a new intimacy with the service,” according to the church history.

The other St. Matthew’s is an Episcopal church that is one of the oldest stone churches west of the Mississippi. The first church, which was consecrated in 1866, had a ceiling made of native heart redwood and windows that came from Belgium and Germany. It was severely damaged in the 1906 earthquake and famed architect Willis Polk, whose other works include the Filoli estate on Canada Road, was named to design a new church, the present one that was built with sandstone from Colusa County.



St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

Some windows as well as the stonework that survived the quake were used in constructing the new church that features a sanctuary surrounded with carved stone and white travertine marble. The partition wall above the altar was made from material saved from the first church.

Good Shepherd Episcopal in Belmont was built in 1876 when it was a mission of St. Matthew’s. The church was Redwood Gothic, 20 feet by 30 feet with a wing for a sacristy. The bell tower was added in 1884. “During this time the church’s debt was paid off by a musical in Belmont Park,” the church history reported.

Over the years several changes and additions were made, including stained glass windows in 1910 and a new sanctuary over Belmont Creek in 1963. The little church became the chapel and is still used for special services, weddings and funerals. The chapel was designated a “point of historical interest” by the state in 1982.

Mount Carmel Catholic Church in Redwood City also was once a mission of St. Matthew’s – the other St. Matthew’s, of course. It wasn’t called Mount Carmel, however. The original name of the church organized in 1863 was St. Mary’s.

The first structure was built at El Camino and Brewster, near the present Samtrans depot, on land deeded to the church by Horace Hawes, the Redwood City political figure who left his name on Hawes school and Hawes Park. Built in 1866, the church, which was typical of the Gothic style so popular at the time, suffered major damage in the 1906 earthquake. When repaired, the church was turned to face El Camino, which was one of the reasons it would be torn down in 1937 when plans called for widening the highway right up to the church steps. Services were held in the auditorium of the Mount Carmel School on Fulton Street until the new church was built next to the school in 1952.

Menlo Park Presbyterian dates its founding to 1873 when 13 people became what the church history called the "Founding Thirteen." The 13 included Henry Coon, a judge who took a gift of one acre at Santa Cruz Avenue and Chestnut Street and built a New England-style church. By 1880 the church would list Jane Stanford, wife of wealthy Stanford University founder Leland Stanford, as a member. The Stanford pew is preserved in the church Pioneer Room, along with a seating chart listing names of other pew holders of the time. Mrs. Stanford thought what was then called "the little white church" was in a "very dilapidated condition," the history said. She supervised the construction of a new house for the minister and also hired a music professor to help the church choir. In 1948 the church had grown to 450 members who decided against building a bigger church on the site of the first church. The original church was torn down but its steeple and sign were kept. The new church at the corner of Santa Cruz and Johnson Street celebrated its first service on Thanksgiving Eve in 1949.

In 1884 Mrs. Stanford joined Col. Edward Eyre, a Civil War hero, and his wife in helping establish Holy Trinity Episcopal in Menlo Park. Leland Stanford himself was listed as a junior warden at Holy Trinity. A senator, as well as a former governor, Stanford founded the Central Pacific, part of the nation's first transcontinental railroad. The first church was built in 1886 on Encinal Avenue but was moved to Oak Grove and Laurel in 1897. In 1938 the church was moved again, this time to Pine Street.

The present Holy Trinity was dedicated in 1950, but the first church is still "serving God, now in its fourth location, housing a Russian Orthodox congregation on Crane St.," the church history says.

There are some other early churches of note in the county, even though they might not fall into the pioneering classification.

In 1893 the First Congregational Church of Redwood City bought and donated the land on which the Woodside Village Church was built. The small, white frame chapel stands next to today's church. It was beautifully refurbished in 1993 to mark the congregation's centennial.

Our Lady of Refuge in La Honda wasn't built until 1953, but its unusual architecture makes it worthy of mention. The church has sliding doors next to the sanctuary that open to a garden and the surrounding giant redwood trees.

Our Lady of the Wayside in Portola Valley is on the National Register of Historic Places. Built in 1912, it was the first commission for architect Timothy Pflueger, who went on to design such landmarks as the 450 Sutter office building in San Francisco and the Paramount Theatre in Oakland, as well as the firehouse on Middlefield Road in Redwood City which is now that city's main library.

In "South from San Francisco," historian Frank M. Stanger recorded the tale of the Geneva Chapel that was part of the San Mateo estate of San Francisco banker Antoine Borel. The small chapel "was said to have been built partly as a family chapel and partly for an incipient Presbyterian congregation," Stanger wrote. The chapel located on the edge of the estate faced El Camino Real where it was a familiar sight to the community. Acquired by the Congregational Church of San Mateo and then by St. Matthew Episcopal, the chapel eventually housed the Hillbarn Theater for 17 years. The final curtain came in 1961 when the building was torn down to make way for the 19th Avenue Freeway.

Churches, of course, are more than physical structures. They must have people, as in the child's rhyming finger play that says "here's the church, here's the steeple, open the doors and see all the people."

What was San Mateo County like around the time these churches were founded? According to the census of 1860, there were 460 farmers, and about 400 farm laborers.

There were some 200 general laborers, 118 shingle makers, 24 carpenters and boat makers, 20 blacksmiths and wagon makers, a dozen sailors and ship captains, a dozen butchers, ten clerks, besides varied occupations, including hunters who went after ducks for the markets. There were also cooks and even dressmakers. The professions listed five attorneys, 13 teachers, four doctors, six nurses and one dentist. Scattered over the Peninsula were a dozen country stores, 15 saloons, most of which were also hotels. There were also four post offices. And very few women.

Females of all ages, from babies to grandmothers, were less than a third of the San Mateo population of 3,214 in 1860.

“This peculiar coloration of the population accounts for the tardy development of schools and churches,” Stanger said in his book, in which, to make this point, he recounts the story of the Sons of Temperance that suddenly sprang up in the lumber town of Woodside in the 1850s. The growth of the anti-alcohol organization was attributed to the “fact that the meetings were held in the home of a widow with a very marriageable daughter.” The Sons of Temperance folded when the young woman announced her engagement to someone from out of town.

An even more telling anecdote is the story of the Bride’s Ship, which, it was hoped, would bring eligible young women from the East to the mining fields of California. The idea was the work of feminist Eliza Farnham. Unfortunately, only three women sailed with Farnham in 1849 to San Francisco. One report said the men who met the ship were so disappointed they were reduced to drinking and brawling. Farnham later wrote “Woman and her Era”, in which she claimed women were inherently superior to men.

Farnham witnessed more testosterone amok when the Vigilante Committee ran “toughs” out of San Francisco in 1856, the same year San Mateo County, which absorbed many of those who fled the city, was founded.

Despite Farham’s theory, there were many good men in San Mateo County. For one, there was Father Denis Dempsey, who was named pastor of St. Matthew’s Catholic Church in 1863. A true “circuit rider,” he put a notice in the Redwood City Gazette to announce that Mass would be held at San Mateo on Sept. 6, 1863,

at St. Denis on Sept. 13th, Redwood City, Sept. 20th and “Spanishtown” Sept. 27th. And, of course, there was the aforementioned Dennis Martin.

More women would come with the driving of the golden spike that celebrated the linking of the nation by rail. The trains also brought thousands and thousands of immigrants from Europe, which was reflected in many of the Catholic parishes.

Father Larry Goode of Saint Francis of Assisi Church in East Palo Alto said that today St. Patrick’s Day is marked in his parish by African Americans, Pacific Islanders and Hispanics.

“One hundred years ago there were lots of Irish in Ravenswood (the original name of East Palo Alto),” the priest said. “The only things they left behind were the streets named after them – O’Connor, O’Keefe, Donohoe, Kavanaugh, etc.”

The influx of Portuguese settlers brought colorful changes to the coastside, where many of the Iberian immigrants became whalers. Mrs. Rufus Hatch noted in her 1878 diary that the newcomers held a strange celebration that had religious meaning.

“Undoubtedly this was the first enactment here of Chamarita, a folk festival that has become an annual all-community affair, not only in Half Moon Bay and Pescadero but also in a number of other California towns,” Stanger wrote. The tradition is kept going by the Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit, known by the initials I.D.E.S.

The festivities were a bit different at some of the Protestant churches.

Holy Trinity Episcopal in Menlo Park had a “gold plated” group of parishioners from the very start, including Leland Stanford, mentioned earlier along with his wife, oil industry pioneers Charles Felton and George Loomis, as well as Edward Hopkins, nephew of railroad tycoon Mark Hopkins.

“Alas, none of these illustrious vestry members were noted for regular church attendance, preferring to let their wives and children represent them,” the church history reported. Parish legend claimed the men of the early church dedicated the last pot from their weekend poker game to the church, the history continued, describing the pot as “substantial.” An envelope full of cash would be found in the collection plate. It was signed J.P. as in Jack Pot.

The early parishioners at Episcopal Church of St. Matthew in San Mateo formed the “Protestant aristocracy of the Peninsula,” wrote Peninsula historians Michael Svanevik and Shirley Burgett. The ranks included the families of William Ralston, Darius Ogden Mills, Ansel Easton and Alvinza Hayward.

“For years, St. Matthew’s Episcopal was unquestionably the most powerful non-Catholic church south of San Francisco,” the two wrote in a newspaper article.

The man behind this power was Alfred Lee Brewer, who, like Father Dempsey, his Catholic counterpart, was a circuit rider in the early years who held services in Redwood City and Belmont as well as San Mateo. He would occasionally take the stagecoach to Half Moon Bay, San Gregorio and Pescadero.

Among other accomplishments, the Rev. Brewer started a military school that operated from 1865 to 1915 that became one of the most highly regarded institutions in the state. The cadets included William Ralston Jr., Ogden Mills, “muckraker” writer Lincoln Steffens and three Hawaiian princes. He also established a strict school for girls and young ladies.

There are so many similarities in the lives of Brewer and Dempsey that one wonders if the two ever met and, if they did, how they got along. Brewer established the military school while Dempsey helped forge Redwood City’s Mount Carmel School when he gained the support of the teaching nuns of the Sisters of Notre Dame. There is a difference, however. The military school is gone. Mount Carmel School celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2010.

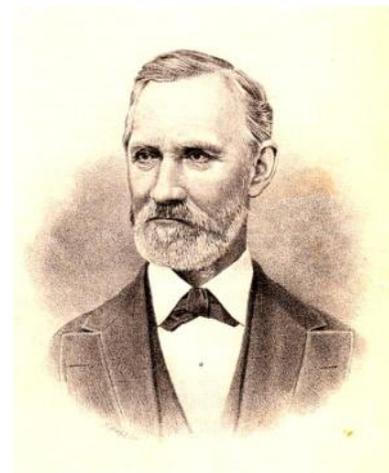
The Town of Purisima

By John Edmonds

It is very difficult to tell exactly who came first to the area known as Purisima, except for the Coastanoan Indians and the Spanish land grant holders who followed. The town was located near the coast and adjacent to the creek we call Purisima Creek, a name bestowed during the Spanish period early in the eighteenth century.

The first record of anybody stopping at Purisima Creek was that of the Portola Party, which spent several nights at the mouth of the creek until driven crazy by fleas. The explorers rapidly headed in a northerly direction to escape the insects while busily scratching their itching bites.

The original Spanish land grant was given to Jose Maria Alviso and called Rancho Canada de Verde y Arroyo de la Purisima. The property in question extended from the coast to the top of the mountain and from Purisima Creek to Lobitos Creek.

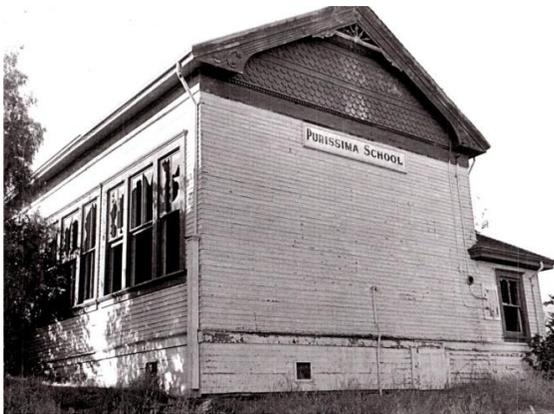


Benjamin Lathrop

One of the earliest persons to purchase property from Alviso was Benjamin Lathrop. Benjamin was well known because of his role in the beginning of this county and his job as the County Recorder. He spent most of his time recording court proceedings and through this process he met many influential people.

Benjamin purchased a large piece of property on the south side of Purisima Creek about three miles from the coast. He built several structures and in the process he discovered a spring which produced sulfur smelling water. Always looking toward financial opportunity, he advertised the property as the "White Sulfur Springs Hotel." "Surrounding them is beautiful scenery, fine fishing and being within three miles from the Pacific Ocean which affords the advantages of sea bathing and sunshine," the Daily Evening Bulletin reported on Thursday, May 29, 1856.

People started coming to Purisima almost immediately and in the following four years an entire community developed. The San Mateo County Times and Gazette on April 7, 1860 talked about the "Purisima Division No. 80, S (Sons) of T (Temperance) meets every Sunday evening at 7:30 in the Purisima School House.



Purisima School House

Officers:

Willard Buzzell
 Nathaniel Meador
 William R. Shelton
 Jotham Blackwell
 John Baldwin
 Richard Van Carnap
 T. E. McEvoy
 James Blackwith
 Reverend Mr. Trousdale, Chaplain

The same issue talked about the meeting of the Purisima Library Association which met at the same school building at 7 o'clock on every Saturday night. Officers: H. S. Loveland, president; T. L. Boucher secretary and school teacher.

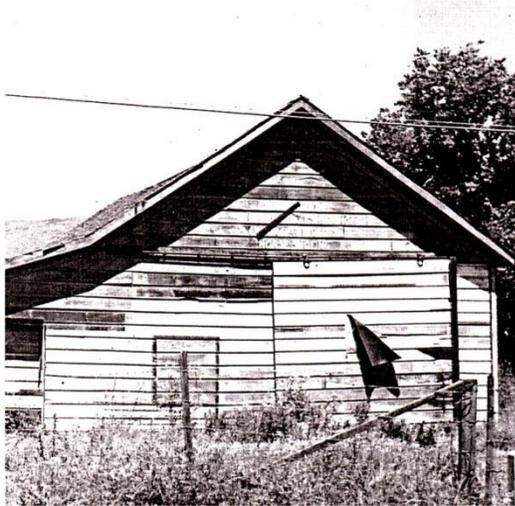
The town of Purisima continued to grow, but in early 1862 a great tragedy struck and everything changed. The Sacramento Daily Union reported on January 17, 1862: "Purisima, January 10, 1862; the flood has been most disastrous on this creek, especially to N. C. Lane. About two or three acres of ground slid into the creek above the saw mill overwhelming the barn and killing instantly two valuable horses and four oxen. It then struck the Snelling house completely demolishing it. Lane had just completed his house and furnished it with new and costly furniture which is all a perfect wreck. The family saved themselves with difficulty having only four or five minutes notice before the water bore the house away and dashed it to pieces among redwood trees hundreds of feet long and many of them six or eight feet in diameter. The most remarkable incident that occurred during the disaster was the saving of the piano forte. Every other article was either crushed to fragments or borne away by the resistless torrent; the piano was lifted on the top of a large redwood log and deposited unharmed some distance below the general wreck." The article goes on to discuss at some length the destruction of almost everything over a three mile distance to the ocean.

It was in 1862 that Benjamin Lathrop recognized that the Purisima mineral springs was not going to be the success he had envisioned. He put the springs up for sale and, because of his necessity of being in Redwood City, he made the contact person Silas H. Bowman who was on a neighboring piece of land and had been the third Sheriff of San Mateo County. The advertisement came out in the March 29, 1862 issue of the Gazette.

One of the first buildings in Purisima was the "Purisima House" a hotel erected by Willard Buzzell and run and operated by Mary Buzzell. This structure was not affected by the floods of 1862 and was still in operation for a number of years.

The editor of the San Mateo County Gazette once undertook a little snooping trip over on the coast-side and in the July 7, 1866 edition he had this to write after he returned to Redwood City: "Arriving at the Purisima House we fortunately found good accommodations and plenty of room as the guests had mostly left in order to enjoy the 4th of July in San Francisco.

The house is well kept and every attention is given to render the stay of visitors pleasant. The house is not one hundred rods from the beach where sea-bathing can be indulged in by all who desire it. There is one of the best sulfur springs within three miles of the beach.



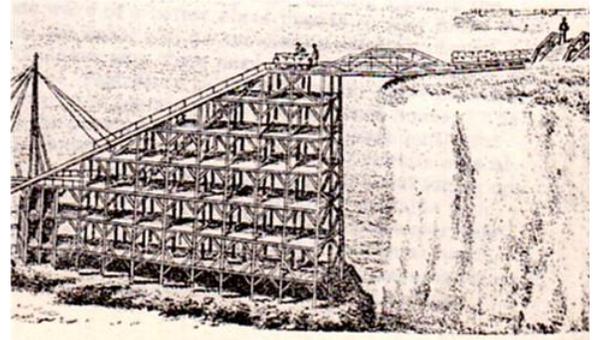
D. W. Connelly's Purisima Blacksmith shop across from the Purisima House Hotel

This hotel is owned and operated by a Mrs. Buzzell and is getting to be very well known and well visited by people from San Francisco, San Jose and from all points between."

D. W. Connelly erected a blacksmith shop across the road from the two story Purisima House. The growing population, especially the increasing number of ranchers, all required the attention that Connelly could provide. He was in a good position to provide blacksmith help for the number of visitors now riding over the hill to enjoy the services provided in this little coastal town.

It was not long before a second hotel was established by Richard Doherty, 49, a native of Massachusetts. A general store was opened by R. Rhode & Co. Then Henry Dobbel purchased 907 acres from John Purcell for \$32,500. Dobbel then established his impressive residence and two saloons were soon opened for business as well. Dobbel also erected a harness and blacksmith shop on the property obtained from Purcell. Doherty took over the stage office business and the stage coaches began a regular stop at this small rural town.

In 1872 Doherty also took over the post office contract. During that year John Redford erected a large hall 30x70 feet for Doherty. But the Doherty Hotel was gone by 1875, destroyed by fire.



Sketch of Tunitas Chute courtesy (SMCHA)

It was the lumber business that really kept the town of Purisima alive. Bordon and Hatch built a lumber mill five miles above the town on Purisima Creek. They became the primary source of lumber for the Tunitas Chute whenever they received a job that required the marine order of transportation, which was often. More about the fascinating Tunitas Chute later.

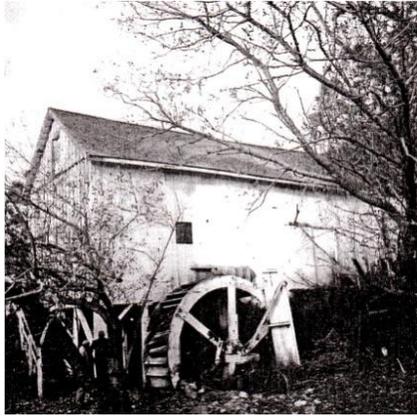
By 1871 a general mercantile store was in full operation and an independent specialty store was selling boots and shoes to the general population which was now heavily into agriculture in the rich soil of the Purisima Creek Valley. Henry Dobbel had many acres now planted in potatoes and was harvesting a marvelous crop every year. This project was almost as profitable as his hotel business.

By 1865 some of the residents of Purisima began to die and a burial ground was increasingly necessary. Mr. M. W. McCoy owned two acres of land near the coast that was being used for burial purposes. This resident of Santa Clara County, sold these acres; which already included the Purisima School, to Joseph E. Sellick, John Purcell and George F. Wyman for the specific purposes of the erection of a Protestant church. The three men were then the trustees of the Purisima Cemetery.

The Gazette on March 31st, 1866: "W. S. Downing and H. A. Reed are carrying an extensive dairy business on the Downing Ranch, near the Town of Purisima. We learn that they are making 150 pounds of cheese each day.

The cheese making is under the exclusive superintendence of Mr. Reed, who as the reputation of being the best cheese sharp in California, as all will admit who have indulged in the luxury of eating any of the celebrated 'Woodside Dairy' cheese while Mr. Reed was the head cheese man of that institution."

In August 1866 Mary Buzzell had more construction done on her "Purisima House" which allowed for more rooms for visitors.



Mr. Reed's waterwheel on Purisima Creek.

Her business increased accordingly. By this time the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad was operating regularly and San Franciscans were able to easily take a train ride down to San Mateo and then a stage coach, which were also running more regularly since the service had been taken over by Half Moon Bay's Levy Brothers who very soon added a San Mateo Office. All of this added to the coffers of a variety of businesses in the little (but growing) town of Purisima. The stage coaches were stopping at Mary Buzzell's hotel because she now had the postal contract and the mail was carried by the stage coach.

The San Mateo County Times-Gazette reported on January 27, 1872 the untimely death of Davis W. Connelly. Connelly had been a resident of Purisima since the town began and his death was a shock to the community. He had been a member of the County Board of Supervisors for a period of time and in 1858 he was elected to represent the area in the California State Legislature. At the time of his death he was the State Commissioner of Park and Recreation.

In June of 1872 the Husing Brothers, who had been merchants in San Mateo, established a business of general merchandise in Purisima. Henry Husing purchased a substantial lot of three acres from Mr. Henry Dobbel. They modeled the structure exactly after their very successful building in San Mateo.

One month later the Gazette reported a letter to the Governor which stated, "Purisima is one of the most promising business points we saw during our trip. It is in the center of a superior agricultural district and far enough from other towns to do a thriving business. The town comprises one wagon shop, one harness and blacksmith shop, one hotel, one saloon and one shoemaker shop. The Husing Brothers building 44x60 feet on the ground floor and the second floor is being completed. The first floor is to be used as a saloon, the upper floor for general hall purposes and will be ready for occupancy in a month. George Duncan's fifty acre farm is very productive and the fifteen hundred acre Dobbel farm, which was purchased three years ago for \$32,500 is also very productive. Jasper Vancarnap, an old resident thinks the crop better than average."

In October 1872 John Radford, who we mentioned earlier, erected a large hall, 30x70 feet, for Richard Doherty, of the Purisima House, using 11,000 feet of tongue and groove in the construction.

November 23rd the paper said, "Richard Doherty was sparing no money to his promised ball on Thanksgiving night. The hall is sealed with pine and redwood and lighted with some thirty burners. The music stand is suspended from the wall seven feet from the floor. The hall is within just a few feet of the hotel and Mrs. Doherty will be making the ladies feel right at home."

The Thanksgiving feast was flush with fresh vegetables and meat and the ball that followed was second to none in the county that year. Doherty, not content with simply a hall, added onto his structure and went into the hotel business right, or almost right, alongside, Mrs. Buzzell. There was more than enough business to keep both hotels going almost all the time.

The newspaper in December was only slightly critical of Henry Dobbie when he rented 500 acres of land from James Johnston. "Who pays \$69,400 in taxes on his property and is one of the biggest farmers of this place raising potatoes seems to feel his broad lands are not sufficient for his care and culture."

The major event that occurred in 1873 was the chute at Tunitas Creek. The Times-Gazette reported on April 26, 1873, "Next Monday the pioneer steamer is expected at the Tunitas Chute with the anchors, buoys etc and to take away a cargo of grain. The successful loading and departure of this steamer will be the most important event occurring in this section since the white man saw it. It lies midway between the Pomponio and the Purisima Creeks and will be sustained by the produce from 50 square miles of rich country that now seeks various outlets over miles of mountain roads."

Another travelogue in May 1873: "When reaching the town of Purisima the road turns to the right up the creek along which are located several valuable farms. Among the prominent ones where the crops look well are the farms of George Shoults, Silas Henderson Bowman and James Campbell. Mr. Bowman's orchard is celebrated for its fruit and its luscious and extensive variety. (note: Silas Bowman was the third Sheriff of San Mateo County, being elected in early 1860. He died in late October and is buried in Pilarcitos Cemetery in Half Moon Bay).

Thanksgiving in 1873 was again a grand ball at Doherty's Hall and again he spared nothing in order to give his fellow townsmen and many who now were coming from San Francisco and Redwood City a particularly wonderful experience.

Christian Cluber was 36 years old when he died. He had come to Purisima from his native, Holstein, Germany. He was working on the nearby Gordon's Chute on the coast at Tunitas Creek. He had been living at the home of his brother-in-law when the accident occurred and he was taken to the house where he died. He was buried in the Purisima Cemetery.

In November 1874 a public meeting was held in the Purisima School House for the purpose of electing new trustees of the Purisima Cemetery.

The retiring board members were; William Pringle, John Johnston and R. L. Mattingly.

Henry and Catherine Clarkson settled in Purisima very early in 1852. They built an adobe house and a substantial farm. In January 1875 Catherine passed away and was buried in the Purisima Cemetery. Henry followed his wife soon after. The Clarkson's were very well known and highly respected people on the coast and especially in Purisima. Their loss was a severe blow to the entire town. Henry Dobbie purchased the old adobe house; later Connelly purchased it who then sold it to Purcell who sold it back to Dobbie.

The Times-Gazette on February 12, 1876 announced the tragic loss of the Purisima House to fire. The house, owned and operated by Richard Doherty occurred on a Sunday afternoon. Doherty had just purchased the house from Mrs. Buzzell that very month and the loss to Mr. Purcell and the community was very great.

Life continued in the little town and The Husing Company was doing a very good business in groceries, provisions, clothing, boots, shoes, wines, liquors, cigars and dry goods.

June 1876 saw another improvement to the town of Purisima when Charles Walker and J. Levy established a very large picnic ground at the redwood tree line up Purisima Creek. They erected a 40x60 foot building with a good wood floor for dancing and it was near the location of the now defunct saw mill of Bordon and Hatch. The picnic grounds had nice new swings, lunch tables, Copenhagen rings and were planted with ornamental trees. The Good Templars held their annual picnic at the grounds which were now called, "Fairmont Park," The grounds were three miles east of Purisima and five miles south of Half Moon Bay.

The Times and Gazette on August 13, 1877 announced that, "Work has commenced on the Purisima School House. It will be located on the same premises of the present school house. A good brick foundation has been laid and the floor timbers are down and it is intended to construct a first class building. It will be two stories high and 32x44 feet with a wing for all and a stairway 14x26 feet.

When completed there will be one school room, music room and library room below and two spacious school rooms on the second floor. The trustees of the district are Henry Dobbel, George Donks and Mr. Campbell.”

In November 1877 Mr. Rathye H. Husing retired from the general merchandizing business at Purisima and retired to San Francisco. Mr. Henry Dobbel took over the business and his reputation all over the county helped him to become quite successful even though his reputation was as a farmer.

The 1878 History of San Mateo County by Moore and DePue gave a very rough sketch of the town of Purisima as of that date. They also listed the residents.

C. H. Bordon,
New York, 1853, lumberman

John Butts,
Germany, 1862, farmer

Henry Dobbel,
Germany, 1868, farmer/merchant

Richard Doherty,
Massachusetts, 1860, hotel/stage prop.

Dennis Hanegen,
Ireland, 1862, farmer/Irish Ridge

Levi Lantz,
Ohio, 1858, farmer/dairy

C. Markman,
Germany, 1873, farming

P. Moran,
Ireland, 1863, farming/Lobitos

The newspaper had the following update on the Purisima School House in January 1878. “This is one of the pioneer districts of the county, being about the first, if not the first, formed on the coast side of the mountains. Formerly it embraced Tunitas District and other territory but at present it covers but a small area including the coast road from Hovius to Frey’s and the Purisima Valley.

The building which has been used for the past 18 or 20 years was renovated and enlarged some years ago and too much credit cannot be given to the trustees: George Duncan, Henry Dobbel and John Campbell. The school has been taught the past year by Miss Mary Bradley. G. P. Hartley is the Superintendent. “

Moore and DePue’s book also gives school statistics and the facts for Purisima School are that in 1878 there were 77 students, 42 boys and 35 girls. It is interesting that the average daily attendance was 13.

Early in 1880 the Reinhold Rhode Company established itself in Purisima probably taking over the building that housed the Husing firm. They were general merchandise as well selling full lines of staple groceries, dry goods, boots and shoes, crockery, glass ware, woodenware, varieties, notions etc. choice wines and liquors and cigars. They were both wholesale and retail.

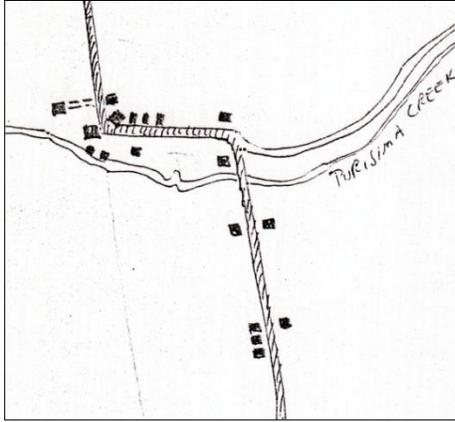
The newspaper announced on July 18, 1885 the marriage of Reinhold Rhode to Miss Wilhelmina Dobbel, eldest daughter of Henry Dobbel. The union took place in San Francisco. All parties live in Purisima.

Things in Purisima really went on the upswing when they started to drill for oil. By July 31, 1886 the Times-Gazette announced, “This place is the center of the oil region there being eight or ten wells in the vicinity, two of which are very promising. Considerable oil has already been shipped from here to San Francisco and pronounced to be of very good quality.”

John Butts died in February 1889 in the German Hospital in San Francisco. John was 58 years of age and left a wife, two sons (one of which, Henry, became a highly recognized Deputy Sheriff in the 1920s) and one daughter. The funeral and burial ceremony was officiated in Purisima Cemetery by Reverend B. F. Taylor of the Methodist Church.

In 1893 the Dobbel Brothers who now owned the mercantile business in town decided to retire. They offered the entire stock in the store at less than wholesale prices and some for later payment.

Times-Gazette December 27, 1894 talked about a new cheese dairy that was established by Horace Nelson and sons. This one was built on Purisima Nelson’s cheese was rapidly recognized locally and soon thereafter on a much broader scale.



Town of Purisima c1896, the new coast road dissects the town from north to south.

The quality of his cheese was very high but he was able to keep the prices down because of the money he saved by the creation of the water power. He continued to make a good profit.

The Redwood City Democrat, the successor of the Times-Gazette, announced the death of Richard Doherty at age 62 years. Richard had owned the Purisima House and sold it and the Pescadero House and sold it and for a time he had conducted a stage line between Half Moon Bay and San Mateo. Richard's remains were interred in the Odd Fellows plot in Half Moon Bay.

The paper, in the same issue, under Half Moon Bay, said, "The Pillar of Purisima is no more... The deceased was the last of Old Purisima. More than half the life left the town when Henry Dobbel joined the silent majority and with Richard Doherty has gone the rest."

This death followed the gradually failing oil well program and the new state highway that passed through the town.

The Redwood City Democrat of May 12, 1898 noted that the Purisima House was now owned by Marco Faccini and C. P. Mosconi. Faccini was retiring from business and Mosconi was running it on his own.

On February 14, 1901 the Post Office in Purisima closed and all mail was directed to Half Moon Bay. When Mrs. Catherine Butts died in February 1902, she was buried in Mount Olivet Cemetery in Colma.

The oil wells were still producing 19 barrels a day but the production was dropping off with the primary production coming from the well in Lobitos. During this period a new strike was hit and as hope springs eternal they felt it was very promising especially because the oil was found at a quite shallow depth.

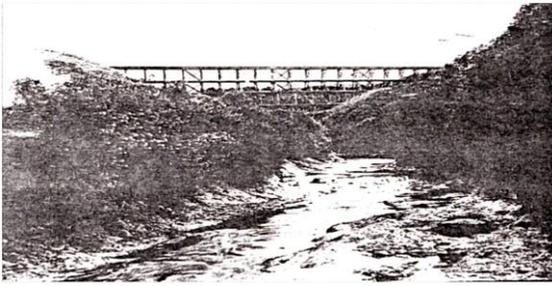
In 1914 Hatch restarted his sawmill in upper Purisima Canyon and employed some 35 men, the average payroll for the 35 men was \$100 per day. That's the total payroll, not individual.

The Democrat on January 28, 1915 announced the death of George W. Shoults in San Francisco. The deceased was one of the few remaining pioneers of the coast. His homestead in Purisima Valley was always a very hospitable place. The last few years he lived at Half Moon Bay having leased the entire Purisima homestead. He came to Purisima from the Midwest when he was six years old in 1853 and lived there continuously. When he was a young man he married Miss Annie Bullock, daughter of District Attorney and Judge Joseph J. Bullock who was elected District Attorney in 1898." The Purisima property was sold to Liberty Oil & Refining Company.

In May 1924 the Butts property was sold to the California Pacific Title Company for \$135,000. The paper believed it was purchased by the title company for oil interests.

In 1925 there were two lawsuits filed in San Mateo County courts against the oil companies charging that they had contracted to drill a certain number of holes and they failed to do so. There was a good hit albeit brief in the mid 1920s by E. L. Doheny but the well was not deep and soon ran out and Mr. Doheny left the area going to La Brea in Southern California where his success was far greater.

Roy W. Cloud wrote in his book, San Mateo County, Volume #1, that, "In passing just beyond the school house a right-angle turn leads down through the valley to the little town of Lobitos."



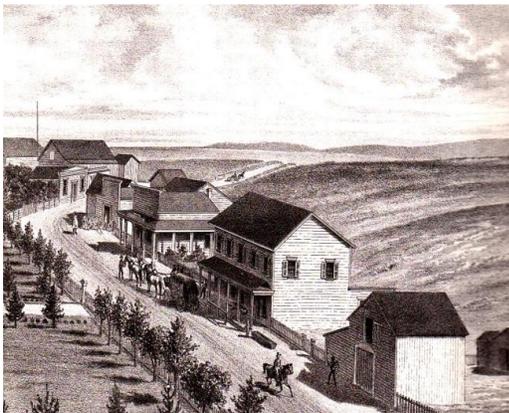
The Ocean Shore Railroad Trestle over Purisima Creek

I am including some of the people who lived in the undefined boundaries of Lobitos (not that Purisima's boundaries are so well defined) but these people are buried in the Purisima Cemetery.



*Moore & De Pue Sketch of Purisima
(above and below)*

Nicholas Martin, whose beach is still well recognized south of Half Moon Bay, lived on the border of Purisima and Lobitos.



An article in the San Mateo County Times and Gazette on January 1, 1884 stated, "On Monday evening Miss Alice Martin, the amiable daughter of Nick Martin of Lobitos, was arrested by constable Joel H. Mansfield and brought before Justice John Pitcher on a charge of living a single life. On Constable Mansfield promising to protect the young lady through the world and care for her in the future, they were married by the Justice."

The Mansfields moved to Redwood City shortly after when Joel was appointed Undersheriff under Phil McEvoy in 1897.

The Purisima Cemetery

The only thing that remains of the once fabled little town that had such great spirit and warmth of friendships is the cemetery that carries the memories of those precious moments.

The best description of the exact location of the cemetery was one I found on line and written by Ms. Dayna Chalif. "From the town of Half Moon Bay, take Hwy 1 (Cabrillo Highway) south towards Santa Cruz. About 4 miles south of Half Moon Bay, you will see a sign that says: UC Elkus Ranch" then another (a large yellow diamond) that says "Verde Rd." Just after those signs make a left at Verde Rd. On the right side of the road, soon after you turn onto Verde is a short Green metal gate.

Park in the little clearing near the gate, across the street and walk up Verde about 10-20 paces. You should see a short embankment and a little path. Walk up the path and turn to your left and you see the Josephine Harsha stone just ahead." The first thing to say about the cemetery is to give the reader the legal ritual that took place to get it started.

This contract is taken from Volume 8 of Deeds at Page 285, San Mateo County Records: "This indenture made and entered into this Fifteenth day of September A. D. One thousand eight Hundred and Sixty eight. Between John Purcell of the County of San Mateo, State of California, party of the first part and John Johnston, R. L. Mattingly, William Pringle, Andy Baynard and John Purcell, parties of the second part and the Purisima Cemetery Association of the Third part, all of the same County and State."

“Witnesseth that the said part of the first part for and in consideration of Love and affection as well as the interest, welfare and public good he has given, granted, aliened and confirmed and by the presents does give, grant, alien and confirm unto said party of the second part and their successors as trustees of the Purisima Cemetery Association forever all of the following described property, to wit:

“All of that cut and tract of land situated in San Mateo County, State of California and bounded as follows on the north by the County Road leading from Spanishtown to Pescadero, on the east by the lands of Flynn, South by the lands of Dobble, containing about five acres the same being now fenced and known as the Purisima Burial Ground.”

“Together with all said singular, the tenements, hereditaments and appurtenances there unto belonging or in anywise appertaining and the reversion and the reversions, - and also all of the estate right title interest property and remainders, rents issues and profits thereof – and also all of the estate right title interest property and possession as well in law as in equity of the said party of the first part of in or to the said premises and every part and parcel thereof, except such as is hereinafter reserved to have and to hold all and singular the said premises together with the appurtenances thereunto.

“In trust and to and for the several uses, intents and purposes hereinafter mentioned, namely.....

“First that said premises shall be used for all time to come as a cemetery or burial place for the dead under the care and direction of the trustees of the Purisima Cemetery Association, provided that no change shall ever be made for the right of burial therein and that all burial rights there shall forever remain free and available to all those who may wish or desire to enjoy use or bury therein;”

“Second. There shall be reserved upon said premises 150 feet in width by 300 feet in length on the north east end of said tract for the purpose of erecting thereon a Protestant Church, provided that the pews and services of said church shall always be free and open to all sects

and denominations for the purpose of worship without exclusion, cost or charges;”

“Third, the said party of the first part especially reserves from out of the covenants of this deed his family burial lot being 16 feet by 32 feet enclosed and marked in the name of John Purcell wherein lies buried the body of his late beloved wife and so much of said land as in herein last described is entirely reserved to the granter, his heirs and assigns from out of this deed forever;”

“Fourth, and said land herein described is intended to be conveyed to said parties of the second part in trust and for the purposes and uses mention herein for the benefit of the said party of the third part namely the Purisima Cemetery Association and said trustees and their successor parties of the second part hereby signify their acceptance of the trust for the uses and purposes herein mentioned and agree to faithfully discharge the same;”

“Fifth, said trustees shall exercise the care and supervision of all burials and direct the place of entering same and have the general care and management and keep said fence and grounds in good state of repair and preservation;”

“And in failure thereof or in any part of said trust, then the said land and premises shall revert to said John Purcell, said party of the first part, his heirs, executors, administrators or assigns.”

“In witness thereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal.

(Signed) John Purcell

I will now begin an examination of the people buried in the old Purisima Cemetery. My normal process of finding people and gaining sufficient information to give an interesting history and perhaps a picture is through the Shellens collection in the Local History Room in the Redwood City Public Library. I started that process with John Butts but was able to find only Henry Butts, John's son, but I know John had a very substantial farm at Purisima and I know where his property was so I shall begin with that premise that, Butts, John was born in Hanover, Germany. He was married to Catherine who was also a native of Hanover. John owned several valuable pieces of property in Purisima.

They were on both sides of the county road and on the south side of Purisima Creek. They were rather extensive pieces of property and John farmed them most of his life. He died on February 6, 1889 at the age of 58 years; he was buried in Purisima Cemetery.

John's son Henry moved over the hill to Redwood City and went into law enforcement with the Sheriff's Office. He became the Undersheriff under Joel Mansfield following the death of Sheriff McEvoy in 1897. Henry attended school in the Purisima School House and Passed away in 1917. He had a superlative record in the Sheriffs Office being involved in many major arrests and he was very popular in community and law enforcement circles. He was buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Colma.

John Pitcher was born on July 25th 1827 in Vincennes, Indiana. He married Louisa, a native of "England and the couple came to the San Mateo County coast-side early in the 1860s. They farmed in the Purisima, Lobitas area all their lives. John died February 24, 1924, Louisa preceded John in death and being the first of the Pitcher family to be buried in Purisima Cemetery she was buried on January 28, 1893. The 1889 business directory for San Mateo County shows that John Pitcher was the county tax collector that year. But his primary occupation was farming and his secondary occupation was that of Justice of the Peace."



The Honorable John Pitcher

Henry Dobbel was perhaps the primary resident of the Town of Purisima.

He built the very substantial home on the north side of the downtown area even before there was a downtown area. Across the main street, as the town developed Dobbel built a hotel and a mercantile store, both of which were quite successful. Henry and his wife Margaretha were both the kind of people, who had the Midas touch in their businesses and in their farming enterprises.

Margaretha Dobbel died on September 3rd 1885 at 54 years of age. The San Mateo County Times and Gazette wrote and "In Memoriam" column on September 12, 1885, "Mrs. Margaretha Dobbel, wife of Henry Dobbel of Purisima departed this life on September 3, 1885. The funeral was from her late residence at Purisima being buried in the family plot at the cemetery. Mrs. Dobbel was long a resident of the village of Purisima being among the earliest settlers of that valley. She was a lady of refinement, of a generous nature and a kind and loving disposition making friends among all classes with the patience and meekness born of a nature such as she possessed.

Mrs. Dobbel had many friends of this county and San Francisco. She leaves a large family of sons and daughters to grieve her loss. While we cannot recall the dead and would not if we could, yet we can look forward to that glorious reunion beyond the grave where are neither sorrow nor trials, neither partings or weepings and where we shall meet our loved ones in that beautiful land of sunshine, in that summer of song."

This kind of column is extremely rare in the Time-Gazette and it certainly makes a statement about how the community felt about this wonderful woman.

The newspaper announced the sudden death of Jacob Sultan, a young man of 26 years. "Last Wednesday morning a young man by them name of Jacob Sultan started out to hunt small game. Coming to a fence he climbed over it dragging his gun after him. The gun was in some manner discharged, its contents taking effect in the head, killing the young man instantly." The incident occurred in Purisima on January 13, 1886. Mr. Sultan lived in Purisima and was buried in the Purisima cemetery.

Susan Morrell died August 10, 1882 at 22 years of age. The newspaper said, "She was subject to a slow and fatal disease for several years. She evinced great calmness during her most severe suffering and when death approached to calm his victim she hailed him as an angel of light come to release her from her prison house of pain and conduct her to the land of life and rest beyond the dark shadows that hide it from our view. The tears which fell from all eyes told in language stronger than words how much she was loved. At the grave was sung that beautiful hymn, "There is sweet rest in heaven." Then in our hearts we said, farewell until the morning of the resurrection.

The Redwood City Democrat, printed on Thursday February 2, 1899 had the following article about Edward Henry Frey, "Another name has been added to the death roll. Another home is drooped in mourning and we have laid within earth's embrace all that was mortal of another of the coast's oldest farmers, Edward Henry Frey Sr. of Lobitos. Mr. Frey died at the old homestead Saturday afternoon. Nothing in particular was the cause of his demise – just a gradual going out of the life that was lent this world for three score year and ten more. Reverend John's officiating in services held at the family residence. Beside the open grave as the casket was lowered the members of the M. E. church choir sang a favorite hymn.

Mr. Frey leaves a family of grown up sons and daughters to whom the community extends its sympathy. Edward Henry Frey was a native of Germany. In the early sixties he came with his family to the coast and bought the place which they have since called home. He was a quiet, pleasant and industrious man who looked no further than his home for enjoyment, so exemplary and so upright in business that he was often regarded as a model. His home surroundings are scenes of beauty. His sons remain fully capable of sustaining the good name bequeathed them by their departed parent."

Henry Frey had a 331 acre farm between Purisima and Lobitos and bordering on John Butt's farm of 543 acres. In 1872 Henry raised 60 tons of potatoes and 4500 sacks of grain.

Silas Hovious was the second sheriff of San Mateo County. He served the people of this county from 1859 – 1861.

He was a neighbor and a good friend of Silas Henderson Bowman who succeeded him in office. Hovious was also farmer as was Bowman however Hovious did not have the award winning fruit trees that Bowman grew. Hovious passed away on January 25, 1871 at the ripe old age of 63 years. He was one of the early burials in Purisima Cemetery. I researched Silas Hovious in the Times-Gazette and found but a scant entry simply saying that he had died and not touching at all on his life history. I did include Silas in my book, "Cops, Courts, Jails and Judges of San Mateo County.

James Henry Hovious is also buried in the Hovious plot. He was Silas' son who was one year and three months old.

The most recent burial in Purisima Cemetery is that of Elizabeth Bower Young, who was buried on March 18, 2001. She was a Lieutenant Junior Grade in the United States Navy during World War II, A descendent of John and Louisa Pitcher, she was buried beside Gertrude Young (Pitcher) who died in 1953. John Pitcher was the local Justice of the Peace. His most famous marriage was that of Constable Joel Mansfield to Miss Alice Martin.

The first person to be buried in Purisima Cemetery was a little boy named Downing. This was a tragic burial for the child was not dead, but in a coma. Shortly after the burial a man in Purisima became ill and fell into a stupor and coma. The Downing boy's father realized the possibility that his son might be in a coma, went straight to the grave and dug down to his son who had turned over in the grave.

The Downing family did not remain in Purisima for very long following this tragic incident. Major Jacob Downing and his wife Sarah had been farming in Purisima but following the burial of their son they decided to leave and found themselves in Fresno in 1889.

Franklin B. Hale died very suddenly on September 24, 1886 from, what was called in those days, hemorrhaging lungs. He had been struck in the head several years before by a falling bale of hay. He never really recovered from the resulting injury and had not been in robust health ever since. Hale was born in Rochester, New York in 1850 and came to settle permanently in Purisima in 1857.

He purchased a substantial amount of property and went into farming for the remainder of his life. His wife, Mary E. Hale survived him as well as four sons and three daughters, two of whom are married and live in San Francisco. A large number of intimate friends mourned Franklin at the gravesite at Purisima Cemetery.

It was my original intention to include as many of the 48 people buried in Purisima Cemetery as possible in this paper. The predominate number of burials was children and there is little history of them. The people for whom I could find information are largely those who were recognized by the local newspapers at the time. It is surprising the number of people who did business in Purisima but actually lived in Redwood City, many of whom are buried in Union Cemetery.

Purisima Cemetery is very hard to find but it is worth the effort to visit the pioneer cemetery that has been left to its own survival. The weeds have taken over and there is little to see at first except poison oak. Then there are the rattle snakes that lurk in various invisible holes only to come out when the sun welcomes them, which is somewhat rare in the foggy conditions that usually envelope the cemetery. But who owns the cemetery now?

A letter was sent our by the Peninsula Open Space Trust at 3000 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park on March 10, 1992....”To Whom It May Concern:

The Purisima Cemetery, AN 66-180-050 is apparently owned by the State of California. The original owner, the Purisima Cemetery Association, has no known address, no known membership and all of the original members are buried in the cemetery. A local mortuary and occasionally some of the decedents of the people buried there look after the property a little bit. The original deed is in Volume 8 deeds, page 285, dated September 16, 1868 from John Purcell to the Purisima Cemetery Association. It now requires charge for burial, in perpetuity. There is a 100x300 foot area reserved for a protestant church.

The county the tax records show no known owner. In 1974 San Mateo County considered taking it for back taxes. Phone inquiries show that no agency wants to claim it but all land unclaimed returns to the state, probably Stat Lands Commission. The State has an agency that supervises cemeteries. The laws governing cemeteries are rather strict, arduous and complex which is part of the reason no one wants to claim it. The adjacent property to the south and west is being gifted by the Peninsula Open Space Trust to the State of California (Coastal Conservancy) for eventual transfer to State Parks. It is likely that eventually State Parks will manage it although they do not now.

The letter is signed John N Wade director of Land Protection

Editor's Note

Thank you to the Redwood City Civic and Cultural Commission for their monetary and vocal support for this journal.

Hope you enjoyed the new and improved Journal of Local History of the Redwood City Public Library. Please send us a line at gsuarez@redwoodcity.org or call me, Gene Suarez, at 650-780-7098.

We welcome any comments or constructive criticism. Our next issue will appear in the Winter 2009. From all of us at Redwood City Public Library's Archives Committee, we wish you a pleasant Fall.

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