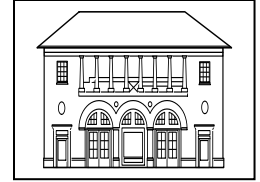


# THE JOURNAL OF LOCAL HISTORY

VOLUME 2 NO. 3

VETERANS' ISSUE

FALL 2010



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

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## The President's Message

### Changes Coming to the Local History Room

The Archives Committee recently took over the staffing of the Local History Room. The volunteers work from Monday through Thursday 1-4pm. Additional volunteers are needed and appreciated. If you are interested in helping, contact me for more information.

The Journal of Local History is an expensive undertaking and we are trying to raise money by adding members to the Archives Association. You can help by inviting your friends to join the association. The subscription form is in the back of this journal. Please use it. It is the best way to show your support for what we are trying to do. I think it is also a bargain. Where else can you get such interesting reading for the price?

With this issue we begin our second year and we are always looking for authors who have knowledge of local history and would like to contribute. Just send your articles to [gsuarez@redwoodcity.org](mailto:gsuarez@redwoodcity.org) and you will see your name in print.

Happy Holidays

John Edmonds

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## The Poets of August

By James O. Clifford, Sr.

*I wrote this poem to remind us that there was a time when people thought there could actually be a "war to end all war," which would be honor enough for all veterans. The poem is dedicated to the many poets who died in World War I. The title is a play on words on the honored history book "The Guns of August."*

"The Guns of August," the history teacher said.  
That's the place to begin.  
The book captures the heart of at least the start  
of a war no one could win.

The prof. lied.  
Too many died for prose to do.  
To really hear the beating heart  
"The Poets of August" is the best place to start.

Don't bother to look.  
There's no such book on the poets killed in the  
war.  
Many, oh so many, whose pens will rhyme no  
more.

For now, a poem will do.  
 A poem written by a fool like me.  
 Only God could make Joyce Kilmer,  
 no matter what the scholars think of "Trees."

Kilmer died late. Killed by hate  
 so vicious no one thought we'd see its likes again.  
 He joined a long line of men: Brooke, Seeger,  
 McCrae,  
 Sorley, Thomas, Rosenberg and Owen,  
 who said it best in "Dulce et Decorum Est."

Today, even Ph.D.s don't know what to say  
 when asked what WWI was called before WWII.  
 The World War, the Great War is the best they  
 can do.  
 The poets knew.  
 It was the War to End All War.  
 Too bad it wasn't true.

## Dr. Charles Kirkpatrick

*By John Edmonds*

The Civil War was a brutal affair in the east as well as the West. It is well known that all too often men were fighting their brothers, fathers and other relatives. As brutal as the battles were it is unfortunately true that many of the wounded that died following the battle did so as a result of the treatment as well as the original injury. The foremost immediate reason was the transportation problems related to getting the injured off the field and into treatment.



*Kirkpatrick residence was on Main Street where the racquetball club is today.*

While Dr. Charles Kirkpatrick did not fight in the east he was part of General Conner's Third Regiment of California Volunteers. This regiment moved around Northern California eventually being sent to Utah Territory to stop Confederate troops moving west. But the United States Government's real purpose was to keep an eye on the "traitorous" Mormon clan that settled in Salt Lake City. The Mormons had fled to this distant land from Illinois and Missouri looking for a place they could call their own. Upon arriving in Utah they declared themselves a separate country and not a part of the United States of America.

The problems with the local Indian tribes in the area were many and the regiment kept very busy trying to keep them under control. Conner's policy was a brutal one and he did not believe in taking Indian prisoners. This policy did not sit well with Dr. Kirkpatrick, but his responsibilities were with the soldiers and he kept his mind on this fact.

Dr. Kirkpatrick treated wounds from arrows and gunshots. So the base hospital was a very busy place. Fort Douglas was on a high piece of land that actually overlooked Salt Lake City. It was established there just so the Mormons could be observed. This, of course, made the residents very nervous and the officials very upset. General Conner told a newspaper man once, as they walked down the middle of town, that all he had to do is wave his handkerchief and Salt Lake City would cease to exist. This attitude says a lot about the General's character.

Dr. Kirkpatrick moved to Redwood City following the Civil War. He established his office and residence at the Corner of "C" and "Third" Streets. He worked as a general physician at first, but by April 1873 he established a separate office and surgical center on Main Street opposite the Pioneer Livery Stable.

A newspaper said, “Now opened for the reception of any who may be in want of medical attendance and good nursing. Hot, cold, medicinal and salt water baths connected with the institute.”

The Times-Gazette reported on September 1, 1877 that Dr. Kirkpatrick and Dr. S. S. Stambaugh had developed a partnership and were establishing an office and surgical center on Main Street at the first door north of the Pioneer Drug Store.

Dr. Kirkpatrick had a friend who apparently worked with him in the army and came to Redwood City in 1881. The friend was Dr. D. H. Johnson, who took over Dr. Kirkpatrick’s practice and the latter moved his office to San Francisco while keeping his residence in Redwood City. Dr. Johnson was a physician and surgeon and he worked next door to the Pioneer Drug Store on Main Street. This process was discussed in the March 16<sup>th</sup> issue of the San Mateo County Times and Gazette.



*The window on the left is Dr. Kirkpatrick’s Office and later Dr. Johnson’s.*

Dr. Charles Kirkpatrick joined his brother and two sons in plot 145 in Union Cemetery on April 29, 1892.

## War & Remembrance

*By James O. Clifford, Sr.*

I became the target of heated feedback when I used San Francisco as an example to show that war memorials can reveal more about the living than the dead. I had dared to note in print that the city’s waterfront monument to the communist side in the Spanish Civil War, if moved less than a block, would literally and figuratively overshadow a much smaller sculpture that lists the names of San Franciscans killed in the Vietnam War.

My critics quickly reminded me of San Francisco’s War Memorial Opera House and The Legion of Honor museum, both erected as tributes to the dead of World War I. They also mentioned the bridge of the heroic World War II cruiser USS San Francisco, its shell-pocked remnant standing watch at Land’s End. Their missives only strengthened my point: The men who fought in those wars were regarded by their generation as worthy of honor. To paraphrase the ancient Greeks, the glory of warriors will die unless their sacrifices and deeds are sung – or not. .

Does San Mateo County have a collection of war and remembrance? Yes. One just has to seek it out. In Redwood City alone the list includes three monuments in front of City Hall, the much heralded war memorial at Sequoia High School, the American Legion hall, a World War II tank, the Veterans Memorial Senior Center and Union Cemetery.



*World War II light tank stands guard in Mezes Park*

Other area reminders of service and sacrifice include Memorial Park in LaHonda, dedicated on July 4, 1924 as a living monument to San Mateo County's dead in what was then simply called The Great War or the World War. At Coyote Point, there's a monument recalling the merchant marine officers who trained there in World War II. Serra High School in San Mateo has a wall of remembrance that lists the school's veterans. San Mateo's Library has a display that tells a rare story – that the city was alone in holding a welcome home parade during the Vietnam War. And the museum in Daly City has an exhibit about the weird vanishing of the crew of a World War II blimp.

The monuments at Redwood City's City Hall, all large rock slabs adorned with plaques, remind passersby of sacrifices made in World War II, the Korean conflict and the war in Vietnam, but not in chronological order. The World War II plaque lists the names of the 42 men from Redwood City, a town with a population of only 12,400 in 1940, who died in what historian Ken Burns called simply The War. In much bigger lettering, the Vietnam War memorial lists 15 names from a city that had 55,686 residents in the census of 1970. Off to the side in what seems an afterthought is a piece of granite dedicated to those who fought in the Korean War. There are no names listed on what the memorial calls "The Forgotten War."



*City Hall Viet Nam Memorial*

*City Hall WWII Memorial*



Another "Forgotten War."

Redwood City's truly forgotten war, however, is World War I. There is no monument to that war at City Hall. Perhaps the oversight was collateral damage from the aforementioned La Honda park memorial, which was dedicated to all San Mateo County veterans, including those from the county seat.

"Of all Peninsula communities, perhaps none was more profoundly effected than Redwood City," opined Michael Svanevik, who teaches history at College of San Mateo. He said 284 Redwood City men served and ten died. The figures are for a city that had only 2,442 residents when the census was taken in 1910, seven years before the United States went "over there". Well, World War I was a long time ago, you say. So was The Civil War, yet that bloody conflict is recalled in a Grand Army of the Republic plot at Union Cemetery. The cemetery that dates back to 1859, a six acre site off Woodside Road, contains the remains of about 40 Civil War veterans. Not one was killed in the war – nor born in Redwood City. A statue of a Civil War soldier, complete with rifle, looks out over the graves from atop a base that reads: "to the memory of California's patriotic dead who served during the War of the Union."

The names of two of the ten men killed in World War I, Lloyd Thrush and James Wilson, are, however, engraved on the six foot tall, 54-inch wide gray granite monument at Sequoia High School that lists the school's alumni who died while serving in the armed forces. Unlike the monuments at City Hall, the Sequoia one does not break down deaths into conflicts, but Thrush and Wilson clearly are lost among the many more men who died in World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

More than 700 people turned out in 2005 for the dedication of the high school's monument, which was largely the work of Dee Eva, class of 1961, who lost three friends in the Vietnam fighting.



*Memorial at Sequoia High School keeps growing*

Eva said the memorial, which is surrounded by 22,000 square feet of lawn as well as redwood trees, has become so well known people are using it “to remember friends and family members even though they did not attend Sequoia nor serve in the military.”

She said people purchase concrete benches or bricks and engrave them with the names of relatives. Some buy boulders and place plaques on them. One impressive bench honors 18 veterans from the Carini family, dating back to Giuseppe Carini from World War I.

The huge monument was not the first at Sequoia High. Nearby is a plaque the class of 1955 dedicated to those “who gave their lives in the service of their country.” The plaque rests on a stone donated by the class of 1962.

The Sequoia monument inspired Christian Clifford, a teacher at Serra High School in San Mateo, to gather the names of graduates of his school who served in the Armed Forces. (Full disclosure: He is the author's son). Clifford wanted to pay respect to the men's “faith, wisdom and service.” The names are on a plaque on the school's Wall of Honor. The list includes Clifford, who served on submarines, as well as his three Marine brothers. At last count there were 341 names.

#### A Medal of Honor Recipient

A football field length or so from the Sequoia campus is the American Legion hall, a one story structure at El Camino and Brewster fronted by a large lawn, a flagpole and welcoming signs announcing bingo games and a bar that's open to the public. The hall opened in 1949, replacing the legion meeting place at Mezes Park, where a World War II light tank still stands guard. If visitors look to the right after walking through the front door, they will see a photo of Post 105's most famous member, Mitchell Paige, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his exploits at the Battle of Guadalcanal. Paige, who went to the final muster in 2003, was a marine sergeant on Oct. 26, 1942 when, with all his men either dead or wounded, he moved from machine gun to machine gun as he fired into the advancing enemy. Then, when reinforcement arrived, he led a bayonet charge, according to his citation.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post, named after the earlier noted James Wilson, meets at the Veterans Memorial Senior Center on Madison Avenue near Community Park. Opened in 1956, the center resulted from lobbying by the VFW and the American Legion to get the city to build a meeting place for their organizations, according to a center publication called “Honoring Our Legacy.” Today the operative word in the center's name is more senior than veteran. Offering scores of activities for senior citizens, nearly 3,000 people use the center, resulting in 10,000 visits per month.

Redwood City has an unusual reminder of war – the remains of a World War I destroyer that sits in mudflats in the bay. But that's another story. (See page 11)

### San Mateo's "Vietnam Legacy"

An exhibit in the San Mateo Library is even more unusual because that city was alone in holding a parade for soldiers returning from the war in Vietnam. On display is memorabilia from the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, the famous "Screaming Eagles." A plasma screen shows highlights of the 1972 parade in which the men from that unit were greeted by a banner that read "Welcome home Screaming Eagles" and also declared them "San Mateo's Adopted Sons."

The adoption stemmed from a 1967 letter home to San Mateo by a soldier who wrote his sister that he was concerned about the lack of mail his buddies were getting. San Mateo went on to become the first of hundreds of cities that are part of America Supporting Americans, the parent organization that coordinates the armed forces adopt-a-unit program.



*Crowd forms around what's left of downed blimp.*

### Daly City's "Ghost" Blimp

It's doubtful, however, that any city in the nation can top Daly City when it comes to unusual, rare and downright strange war stories.

The Daly City History Museum has an exhibit that memorializes the day in 1942 when a Navy blimp crashed on a street – without a crew, which, to this day, is unaccounted for. The display in the museum at the "Top of the Hill" contains photos, a miniature replica of the airship, some shards of the blimp's balloon, 1942 newspapers with screaming headlines about the incident, and a reproduction of a depth charge that the aircraft carried.

The depth charge was made for the TV show "Unsolved Mysteries" which ran a segment on the blimp in 1993. The advisors for the show, hosted by Robert Stack, were Daly City historians Ken and Bunny Gillespie.

Bunny Gillespie was a teenager when the blimp arrived on August 16, 1942. She and others raced to see the huge object that dropped from the sky.

"It was a day I'll never forget," she said. "Nor will I ever cease wondering what really happened to the lost Navy officers."

Aboard the blimp were Lt. Ernest Cody and Ensign Charles Adams who were patrolling the Pacific coast in search of enemy submarines. Cody radioed that he was going to investigate a possible oil slick. That was his last message. Next the airship hit a bluff coming ashore, jettisoning a depth charge on a golf course as it approached Daly City where, sagging in the middle, it hit roofs before landing in the 400 block of Bellevue Avenue, its door fastened open and no one aboard. The life raft and parachutes were on board, but not the life jackets. The engine was set on idle and the radio was working.

No trace of the men was ever found and there was no official conclusion given for their disappearance.

## A Brief History of Union Cemetery

*By John Edmonds*

The original entry to Union Cemetery was at the east end near Woodside Road and the wagons proceeded into the cemetery through an open gate that had an arch over it. Roses were planted on each side of the arch and they were bright Red in the spring. It was quite a beautiful entry and the people of Redwood City were very proud of their cemetery.

The first entry that mentioned a cemetery in the Times and Gazette newspaper (which was the only newspaper in San Mateo County at that time) was in early January 1859.

Horace Hawes informed the County that he no longer wanted the dead to be buried on his property and he wanted them exhumed. This caused great anxiety in Redwood City.



*Charles N. Fox*

William Cary Jones, the former owner of the property where Sequoia High School now stands, had allowed thirteen burials on the property. When Hawes took over the property he wanted the thirteen evicted and moved elsewhere. Suddenly there was an upheaval in the community and much indignation toward Mr. Hawes.

A meeting was held in the new courthouse soon after the announcement and a committee of Charles Fox, W. T. Gough and James McCrea was appointed to look into the legality of the decision made by Mr. Hawes. The committee's decision was that he had the right and they recommended that a committee be established to find a suitable new location.

A meeting held February 7, 1859 established a committee to form an organization whose purpose was to find a suitable location for a cemetery and to develop the rules of use and financing. A committee of three men, Charles N. Fox, James W. Turner and John Vinton Diller, accepted the challenge and went to work. A six acre plot of land was located well out of town on the road to the redwoods (Woodside Road) and a purchase agreement was made by the three men and Baird and Berry, the owners of the property. Mr. Horace Hawes redeemed himself in the eyes of the community when he donated a large portion of the purchase price for the property.

The Union Cemetery Association was formally established at the meeting in the courthouse on February 28, 1859.

The three gentlemen mentioned above wrote a formal "Articles of Incorporation" that said "this organization shall be known as the Union Cemetery Association of San Mateo County in the State of California . . . . The sole and only object of this Association shall be the purchase, support and maintenance of a cemetery for the burial of the dead." Officers, will be elected annually by election ballot with majority vote. It goes on to elaborate that a vacancy will be filled in the same manner.

These articles of incorporation were sent to the State of California as there was no organization locally that could legally accept them. A number of communities were having similar problems establishing new cemeteries so the state took possession of Union Cemetery. The incorporation papers were approved on April 18, 1859.



*The American House Hotel on Mound Street and Bridge Street*

By May 1859 the cemetery had been established. A report in the Gazette announced, "There are one hundred and ninety-four family lots, all of good size and public ground sufficient for over four hundred graves."

The process of exhuming and moving the thirteen people from Hawes' property to the cemetery began in May 1859. The first to be moved was 4 year old Anna Augusta Douglass. She was buried on Central Ave about mid cemetery. She was joined by her brother Nathan who also died at age 4 but more than 10 years later. Walking down Central Ave you can easily see the two small markers side by side.

The Cemetery Association had been meeting in the Courthouse since its inception but in April of 1873 it found a new location in the American House hotel on Main Street at "A" Street. The change of officers was announced at this meeting and a newspaper article was submitted by

Herman (H.A.) Schofield now the secretary. This well known attorney and newspaper editor was one of the most prominent citizens of Redwood City.



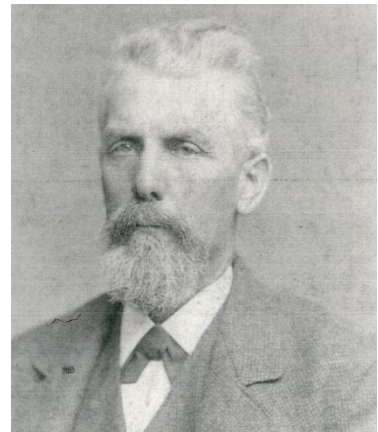
*Times & Gazette Building*

A month later the annual meeting of the association was convened at the American House. At this meeting a new resolution was adopted, "Resolved... where private lots are purchased by individuals, no burial shall be permitted until the said lots are paid for." This was required because in several occasions people had buried relatives in lots that had not been paid for and a 12 by 12 building was ordered erected and a well with a pump was to be completed. An election of officers was held and Curtis Baird was elected President, Charles Ayers was elected Superintendent and George Wentworth became Secretary and Treasurer.



*George Rice*

By 1876 the Times-Gazette newspaper talks about the great monuments that George H. Rice and George W. Fox had erected even to the extent of naming the manufacturer, Muldoon, Walton & Cobb of San Francisco.



*George Wentworth*

An article in the Times-Gazette on May 30, 1885 announced that, "Today is Memorial Day and there are no deceased members of the Grand Army of The Republic in the cemetery." One year later, 1886 the Grand Army of The Republic began meeting at the Congregational Church and marching from the church to the cemetery and decorating the graves of "the late Will Frisbie." The new post became the General George S. Evans Post #72 of GAR. Shortly after that a formal plot was established for the GAR and subsequent burials were made in the new plot.

The Superintendent's register showed 345 interments as of 1878 and it listed the largest majority were born in California. Something new was added in this register, the designation of specific large lots for several organizations, the largest of which is the Odd Fellows lot to the rear of the cemetery. They also listed the lots for the Grand Army of The Republic, the Masonic and for the Improved Order of Redmen.

The Grand Army of The Republic received an annual grant of \$100 from the county for upkeep of their plot. The Grand Army of The Republic received an annual grant of \$100 from the county for upkeep of their plot. They were a colorful lot with all of them wearing their company uniforms that they received during the Civil War.





### *Union Soldier Statue*

The people of Southern San Mateo County and, more specifically, the people of Redwood City were beginning to recognize the real value of this cemetery in terms of the history of the people who were buried there. The local citizens in the later part of the nineteenth century were talking about “recognition.”



*Grand Army of The Republic and Women's Recovery Assn. May 1886 at the Congregational Church Redwood City*

The Grand Army was deeply indebted to Mrs. Leland Stanford for her generous donation of the soldier which stands upon the towering pedestal that contains the words, “Mustered Out.” On Memorial Day 1886 Geraldine Cooley-Frisbie, organizer and chairwomen of the “Women’s Relief Corps” an adjunct of the GAR gave a very moving speech at the church before

the march.

“To the officers and members of the General George S. Evans Post 72 of the Grand Army of the Republic, Redwood City, I am requested to perform a very pleasant duty. The ladies of San Mateo County have, with true, loyal and patriotic zeal made a flag for your post.

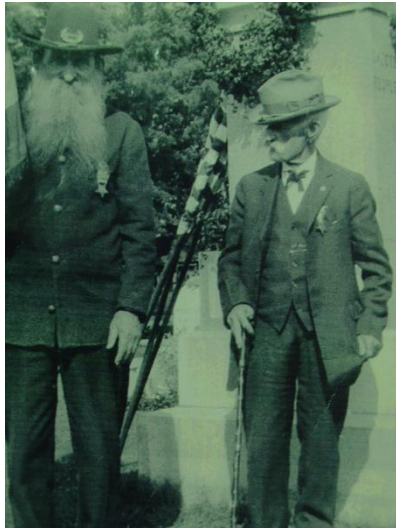
“Words cannot express how deeply they realize and appreciate the noble purpose that had called you together today. I can imagine no word or act on their part whereby they can prove their sincere regard and esteem, and that you treasure more sacredly, than this old flag we all so dearly love, the very sight of which causes the pulse of the nation to beat with pride; whose colors so many times have wafted intelligence of the movements of friend or foe and under its starry folds you have so often marched to victory.” Mrs. Cooley-Frisbie’s words rang with the emotion of the moment.



*Geraldine Cooley-Frisbie*

By 1889 the triangular lot that is 75 feet long 42 feet wide at the rear and 20 feet wide at the front entrance and was surrounded by 8X16 granite coping. The monument now had emblems of the four services on each of the sides. The inscription, “To the Memory of California’s Patriotic Dead, who served during the War for the Union. Mustered Out.” On the opposite side, “Erected by the Grateful People of San Mateo County.”

“It was built by the Western Marble and Granite Company of San Jose and it was a handsome addition to the cemetery” expressed the San Mateo County Gazette on May 25<sup>th</sup> 1889.



*Ludwig Werder and George Shugart, GAR members.*

November of the same year revealed a dramatic increase in the number of monuments in the cemetery. People were placing monuments for recently buried members of families but people were also purchasing and locating monuments for themselves or other older family members

Also the small house that was built a number of years earlier and placed in the Odd Fellow's plot was removed following the burial of Judge Buck's son, Norman who had been run over by a train. The Judge would be buried there in the 1930's.

The Redwood City Standard of June 21, 1923 reported that Mrs. Archer Kincaid and Mrs. Mary Winter, representing the Women's Relief Corps, were working on getting proper head stones of the men buried in the GAR plot. It was through their dedicated efforts that the federal government recognized and made the standard head stones we see today in that plot. This article also addressed the fact that James Peace was buried in the GAR plot. He was an exception as he was never a soldier but he is considered to be the first person to raise the American Flag in San Mateo County. He probably was also a good friend and drinking buddy of a number of the men buried in this plot.

At the Memorial Day service at the cemetery in May 1927 only four Civil War veterans remained alive. They were P. P. Chamberlain, Howard E. Woodward, George Shugart and W. Wilder.

With the veterans came the Spanish American Veterans and the bands from as far away as San Jose, the Boy Scouts and their color guard, the Girl Scouts with their color guard and the American Legion.

By 1945 a new policy had been long established, the development of a potter's field. This is an area for the burial of the indigent and poor. The area in question was against the hedge on the Woodside Road side. During that period Woodside Road was two lanes; it wasn't until the mid 1960s that the road was widened to four lanes. The state highway department simply removed the hedge, graded and paved a second lane on each side expanding the existing road by about fifteen feet with the new shoulder included.

On July 12, 1945 Mary Cereghino, a newspaper reporter, compiled an unofficial history of the cemetery and through this process a title search was done. During that same year Dr. Stanger, with Mrs. Cereghino's paper in hand, wrote his own history of Union Cemetery all of which resulted in further inquiry as to the agency responsible for upkeep in the cemetery. Sometime (and I have not been able to pinpoint exactly) City Ordinance #456 was enacted by the City Council. This ordinance states, "An ordinance of the city of Redwood City regulating burials and the sale of lots or plots in Union Cemetery in said city."

The ordinance provided for a \$300 fine or imprisonment in the county jail for ninety days as a threat for violating the ordinance. It was therefore illegal to bury people except in lots, or plots, owned by the family of the deceased. All further burials were prohibited.

The work done by Cereghino and Stanger was instrumental in forming the application for California State Landmark status. No cemetery had ever been given this honor but the history was so vivid the State Office of Historic Preservation felt it deserved a status that many others had coveted. So Union Cemetery was given California State Landmark #816.

On March 26, 1963, Redwood City Council passed Resolution 3667 accepting a quitclaim deed for Union Cemetery from the State of California.

In 1975 the Archives Committee of the library incorporated and then began work to get the Cemetery on the National Register of Historic Places.

Jean Cloud, chairwoman of the archives committee and Nita Spangler along with several other members began this challenging project.

In October 1991 Peak & Associates and Woodward-Clyde Consultant began work on a Cultural Resources Management Plan for Union Cemetery and a month later Brian, Kangas and Faulk agreed to do an aerial laser survey of the cemetery for \$5,000 and the city council authorized the expenditure.

In November of 1992 the Historic Union Cemetery Association was formed as a non-profit corporation. The original board consisted of Jean Cloud, John Edmonds, Francis Hutchinson and Helen Graves. They sat down with the City Manager and told him that they were going to do everything possible to improve the cemetery and that they would work with the city's park and recreation department to accomplish as much as we could.

The organization was approved and the park and recreation department assigned Ramon Aguilar to our board as liaison. They began holding public meetings and soon a number of people joined the board and helped our efforts to raise a membership list at \$10 annual dues. Enough people joined that we finally were developing a financial foundation.

The condition of the cemetery, when they started, was appalling and the task was daunting. They were able to raise enough money that they could invite V. Fontana and Sons of Colma, to come down and fix 6 monuments for which we had all the parts. They were so impressed with our project that they did twice as many as they had planned. This was such a great improvement that they were invited two more times.

Mrs. Williams, a descendant of the Pool family, donated \$20,000 for replacement of the now totally destroyed soldier in the Grand Army of the Republic plot. Hutch (Francis Hutchinson) and I travelled to Fort Ord where we located a foundry that would develop the soldier from pieces of the original and a number of pictures.

It took several months for the foundry to complete our task but when they completed it and erected it on the pedestal the celebration was a joyous event. Hutch was failing at that time and was brought in by automobile to see an accomplishment neither he nor any of us originally would have believed possible.

A book was written on many of the people buried in Union Cemetery. We sold 1200 copies of the first little book and it was republished with some additional people and new information,

it continues to raise money to continue to improve the cemetery today.

The cemetery has been greatly improved by Boy Scouts working on their Eagle Scout Award. The first Scout worked on the Cooley-Frisbie plot fence that was flat on the ground and had to be completely rebuilt. He did a beautiful job. The two lawns, the paths and a number of fences have been finished and a bench was done by one Scout. One group built the Monument in the front of the cemetery that holds the California State Landmark Plaque. We welcome any groups, especially children, who wish to improve the cemetery by doing projects as long as they fulfill the necessary requirements with the city's Park and Recreation Department and the Historic Union Cemetery Association.

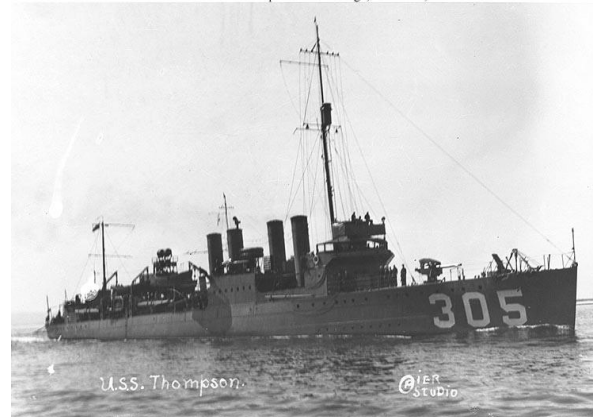
The humble order of E. Clampus Vitus joined the Cemetery Association and they continue to help us every Memorial Day as we honor those who have given their lives for our freedom and those veterans who have put their lives in harm's way and survived.

If you have not attended the Memorial Day celebration in Union Cemetery before, please plan to do so in the future. We still celebrate with a parade, speeches and flags just as they did in 1859 to honor our veterans.

## Bombs Dropped Right Here in Redwood City

By James O. Clifford, Sr.

Photo # NH 69459 USS Thompson off San Diego, California, circa 1920-21



*USS Thompson in better days*

Airplane passengers approaching San Francisco from the south can look down and see the last remnant of the World War II “Battle of Redwood City,” a time when bombs were dropped almost every day. That’s a bit of a stretch because the bombs probably weren’t loaded.

Nevertheless, there’s a history lesson in the bay waters. The passengers can spot what’s left of the destroyer USS Thompson, which was used for target practice that reduced it to a hulk that lies in mudflats near the San Mateo County side of the line with Alameda County.

The Thompson’s remains may very well serve as the tombstone for a line of ships that more than proved their worth - “four piper” destroyers that wrote many of the navy’s finest chapters. While the Thompson served as a floating punching bag, other ships of its class, all of them obsolete for years, were fighting the axis in both the Pacific and Atlantic. One, the USS Ward, sank a Japanese submarine at Pearl Harbor moments BEFORE that naval base was bombed on Dec. 7, 1941.

The wreckage of the Thompson, a 314-foot Clemson-class destroyer that was built in 1919, can be visited by kayakers who are up to the challenge. Those brave enough to venture out include Brian Lucido of Kayak Tours.

“Keep in mind that the South Bay, north of the Dumbarton Bridge, can get pretty rough,” he said. “The water is especially rough in the deep water channel when there is a strong current.”

Others making the voyage to the Thompson include Peter Donohue, who took several photos of the vessel. It is sheer coincidence, he said, that he has the same name as the founder of San Francisco’s Union Iron Works, the company that built the ship.

“No relation that I’m aware of,” he said. The Thompson was one of scores of “four piper” destroyers, a name that stemmed from the number of funnels that highlighted their silhouette, built by the Union Iron Works, which produced several famous ships, among them the cruiser Olympia, Admiral Dewey’s flagship at Manila Bay. The Olympia is still afloat and is a tourist attraction in Philadelphia. The company also built the cruiser San Francisco.

That ship’s bridge is a landmark at Land’s End in San Francisco, serving as a monument to the crewmembers killed in the WWII Battle of Guadalcanal.

The Thompson, named after a former secretary of the Navy, was not as famous as those ships and never fired a shot in anger. Nevertheless, it had a brush with history.

The Thompson was part of a flotilla of 14 destroyers involved in one of the Navy’s worst peacetime disasters. The ships were headed from San Francisco to San Diego Sept. 8, 1923 when the lead vessel made a wrong turn and smashed into jagged rock near Point Conception. Seven ships were lost and 23 sailors killed. The Thompson was last in line and its skipper did not make the fatal turn.

“Being the last in line, the captain, Lt. Commander T. A. Symington, was able to observe the plight of the leading vessels and head out to the safety of deep water,” according to Bob Hoffman of Redwood City, an amateur sailor who recalled that local sailors once mined the Thompson for lead used in practice bombs and turned it into keels for sailboats.

Not much is left of the Thompson. The four smokestacks that earned the destroyers their nickname went a long time ago.

A story in the 1976 Redwood City Tribune noted that during the WWII aerial exercises the ship was “attacked relentlessly by Army Air Corps P-38s, P-51s, Navy Corsairs and other craft.”

Peter Evans, a Berkeley writer who wrote an extensive article on the Thompson for the May, 1997 issue of Latitude 38 said the Navy repurchased the destroyer in February of 1944 for one dollar and used it for target practice “for the rest of the war and probably sometime thereafter.”

Evans reported that the 1976 Redwood City Tribune story carried a companion piece in which a local man who did not want his name used recalled how he conducted his own salvage operations while a student at Sequoia High in the early 1950s. He remembered selling as much as \$300 worth of materials in a day to a scrap dealer – a lot of money then.

The man and his friends also held parties on the Thompson.

“They still had the canvas bunks below, and even magazines left behind by the last crew,” he told the Tribune. “We made fires on the deck to roast hot dogs and generally partied it up, sometimes for whole weekends. The old ship was good to me.”

The fact that there was still so much left of the ship indicates that live bombs were probably not used. After all, the object of practice bombing is to hit the target, not sink it.

Frank Hanning of Redwood City, a Navy pilot in the Pacific during the war, did not bomb the Thompson, but he said that “in all our training in dropping torpedoes, we never dropped a fully loaded one.” During combat “the plane almost flipped over when we released the real torpedo.”

The Thompson already had a reputation as a “party boat.”

Stricken from the Navy list in 1930, the Thompson was sold for scrap, but instead of being broken up, the destroyer’s future included a stint as a restaurant and bar during Prohibition.

The Thompson isn’t the only WWI-era destroyer that sits on San Francisco Bay. The USS Corry was also sold for scrap in 1930 but became stranded on the Napa River a few miles from Mare Island where her hull is well known to anglers, boaters and, of course, kayakers.

While these ships rusted away, others of the line of small ships that went in harm’s way wrote history, among them 32 that were converted to high-speed transports that carried marines and landing craft in shallow waters where the old ships became known as “green dragons” because of their camouflage.

James Grealish of Daly City was an officer on the green dragon USS Waters which had been refitted to carry up to 150 Marine Raiders under cover of darkness to and out of Japanese occupied islands.

“Their shallow draft and 27 knot speed made them ideal for such clandestine missions,” he said.

Grealish has seven battle stars on his ribbon, yet one of his favorite war stories gets a laugh or two.

“In reporting enemy aircraft, crew members were trained to designate the location of the planes using 360 degrees running clockwise from the bow of the ships,” he said. “In addition, they were expected to report the type of plane and the altitude as accurately as possible.”

Such was not the case with one young sailor from Tennessee during an air raid off Guadalcanal in June of 1943.

“In the excitement of seeing Japanese planes approaching our ship, he shouted into his mouthpiece ‘yonder comes a covey of them,’” the officer said.



*Kayakers board wreckage of USS Thompson – Last of the “four pipers?”*

Grealish retired with the rank of rear admiral. For the destroyers like the Thompson retirement began even before World War II ended, continuing until January 1947 when the last of them, the USS Hatfield, was stricken from the Navy list of ships.

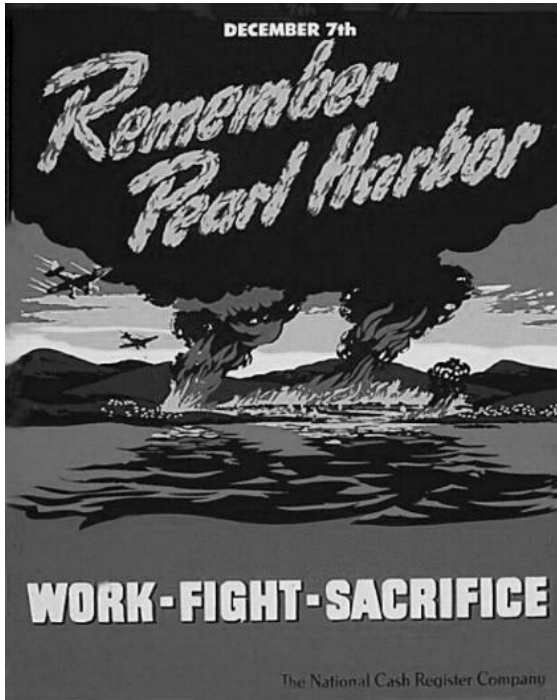
However, taking note of the vessel’s diversity, Commander John Alden wrote in his 1965 book “Flush Decks & Four Pipes” that “perhaps even now one survives as a barge or hulk ....” Right on target, Commander.

## Homefront: Redwood City

*By John Baker*

When Japanese bombs fell on Pearl Harbor the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, figurative bombs were also dropped on small towns across the United States.

Destroyed in these communities were not battleships and cruisers, but rather the myth of American isolationism and the stability of an unchanging lifestyle.



Although the most severe changes related to the war -- rationing, draft boards and the like -- were phased in over a long period of time, life still changed quickly in small municipalities during the immediate days and weeks after the Sunday morning attack in Hawaii. Redwood City, Calif., was no exception.

Redwood City is a suburban community about halfway between the metropolises of San Francisco and San Jose. The county seat of San Mateo County, Redwood City was incorporated in 1867 and named for the tons of timber that used to be hauled out from its waterfront -- the only deep water port in the southern part of San Francisco Bay.<sup>1</sup> According to the 1940 census, the town had a population of about 12,400 at the beginning of World War II <sup>2</sup>, compared to the about 75,000 it housed in 2000. Now a center of the Internet economy, Redwood City was a quiet, bedroom community with few industries -- other than its aforementioned port -- on Dec. 7, 1941.

After the war, Redwood City would transform from a sleepy bayside town into the booming suburb it is today.

While San Mateo County as whole became an industrial force during the conflict, especially in South San Francisco, where a large shipyard was situated, Redwood City's transformation was more muted. Still, in the weeks after the war began, Redwood City was forced into a major upheaval that turned residents' lives upside down. Holiday celebrations were comparatively downbeat. Japanese Americans had to deal with a community no longer friendly to them. City authorities were forced to make war-related decisions that would affect their citizens.

Most changes in Redwood City after the Pearl Harbor attack were probably in step with those experienced by other similar-sized communities across the country. However, with its coastal location near a major city and large Japanese American population, Redwood City also faced situations that were unique to itself.

Although there were significant gradual adjustments to be made as the war progressed -- men entering the service in large numbers, significant numbers of women joining the workforce, rationing, etc. -- there was no period like that after the first two months following Pearl Harbor for sheer, drastic change. People living in Redwood City, and those who worked there, such as in the press, had to face up to the shock of suddenly being at war, the perceived threat of attack, the removal of an active part of the population and a complete change to the national mood. "Redwood Citizens" were forced to adjust to the new world situation and change their lives in a very brief period of time, and most seemed to make a smooth, if uncertain, transition.

### Prelude

The biggest piece of local news reported in the Dec. 6, 1941 edition of the Redwood City Tribune, a daily afternoon newspaper published in the city, was the announced relocation of the National Motor Bearing Company from Oakland to the southern part of Redwood City, near an existing airfield. The \$180,000 plant would add an important defense-related industry, in addition to the Port, and much-needed employment to a city still recovering from the Depression. In fact, Chambers of Commerce across California focused attention on getting heavy, war-related industries to their cities.<sup>3</sup>

The addition of the plant was one of many signs the city was expecting a conflict. In the previous day's newspaper, for example, was a column by Tribune editor Ray Spangler saying he went to a conference in San Francisco in which the press was "told something of the type of relationship it might expect when we go to war." According to Spangler, the speakers forgot to mention the types of censorship already in place, "that even now make this land of free speech a mere hush of its former self."<sup>4</sup>

Spangler noted the press was already voluntarily omitting news of such topics as troop movements and industrial production figures that might become useful to the enemy. "Right here in Redwood City there are news items that have been held by request of the Navy Department. ... This is a type of entirely justified self-imposed censorship," Spangler wrote. "The danger of the thing is it is spreading to civilian authorities. While once a newspaperman was king to print or not print as discretion dictated, he now goes from office to office asking humbly for the charitable bits that public officials are willing to disclose. In the north end community, a husband batted his wife over the head with a chair, sending her to the hospital. The police said they were suppressing the story because it might create more trouble in the family. What more trouble?"

Redwood City -- and the nation -- would indeed face serious trouble two days later.

"A date that will live in infamy"

The weather report in the Dec. 6 Redwood City *Tribune* said the next day would be fair, with little change from Saturday's temperatures in the 50s. There would be early morning fog and gentle northwest winds. But things would get stormy that day, however it had nothing to do with the atmosphere.

Historian Ronald H. Bailey wrote of the Pearl Harbor bombing, "Of all the momentous events that would galvanize their lives of the next four years, this was the one Americans would remember most vividly."<sup>5</sup> That certainly was the case for Art Balsamo and other Redwood City residents.

Balsamo was 20 in 1941, and living near the intersection of Jefferson Avenue and Franklin Street. The morning of Dec. 7, he was driving his Chevrolet convertible on El Camino Real to a nearby café when he heard the news that shocked the country -- Pearl Harbor had been bombed by Japanese planes.

"It was a beautiful day and I put the top down," he recalled. "I started up, got onto Jefferson Avenue, stopped at the signal and turned on the radio. It was full of '*December Seventh*' (news), and it was two hours old (at that point). I got to James Avenue and made a U-turn."<sup>6</sup> Balsamo rushed to the house he shared with two other men and attempted to wake a still-sleeping roommate.

"He says, 'What the hell are you waking me up for?'" and I said, "The Japs just bombed Pearl Harbor," Balsamo recalled. "He says, 'Get the hell out of here! Come on, Art.' I was always pulling jokes on them, that was the problem." Balsamo proved the truth of his story by flipping on the console radio in the home's living room.

"We were sitting in the living room listening to this radio and I never did get breakfast," Balsamo said. "I don't even know what happened the rest of the day. I remember (hearing the news) so vividly." Balsamo enlisted in the Navy in February and became a Seabee -- a Naval construction crewman.

Disbelief was seemingly a common reaction to the news. Shirley McClellan, 13 at the time, had lived in a house near the intersection of Roosevelt Avenue and El Camino Real for about a year. "I was in the house and I heard it on the radio," she said. "I don't remember the words, but it was announced that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. I could just hear the announcer, and the excitement in his voice, the real shock."

McClellan ran into the back yard, where her mother was talking to a neighbor over the fence. "I guess I said, 'Pearl Harbor has been bombed, we're at war.' My mother didn't believe me," she said.<sup>7</sup>

Like Balsamo, 21-year-old Reg McGovern heard the news while driving. He had been with a girlfriend on the way from Redwood City to the beach. "It came over the Mickey Mouse radio on my 1936 Ford," McGovern remembered.

On a spur of the moment decision, he headed away from the sand and toward the San Francisco Embarcadero, where he was moved along by a National Guard soldier protecting the waterfront. "This guy touched our car with a goddamn rifle and said, 'Keep going, this is secure.'"<sup>8</sup>

At Redwood City Firehouse No. 1, it was a slow day, with the only call in the log book being a trip to Forester's Hall, 1204 Middlefield Road, to investigate a small fire. However, at 4:35 p.m. Fire Chief Mark Ryan "ordered all leaves canceled for 36 hours." In pencil was written the reason for the command: "attack of Pearl Harbor this AM." By 5:30 p.m., records show, the fire department had already mimeographed and mailed out "national defense" letters and questionnaires to other fire departments in the area.<sup>9</sup>

At about 6 p.m., Kotoharu Inouye, a 57-year-old chrysanthemum grower "regarded as the leader of the local Japanese community," was arrested without incident by FBI agents at his Valota Road home. Inouye had lived in Redwood City for 35 years at the time of his arrest and was the father of two American-born children. A local newspaper stated that "Inouye's family was taken by surprise by the seizure, but his son said he realized it was the proper procedure during such a time of crisis."<sup>10</sup> Redwood City Police Chief C.L. Collins accompanied FBI agents during the arrest and expressed the opinion that the Japanese would be interned.

### The Days After

The Redwood City *Tribune*, as usual, had no Sunday paper, but its Monday afternoon edition declared above the masthead that the "U.S. Declares War." Citizens were not only told of news of worldwide importance, but also how it could affect their own lives. A front page map clearly stated that the West Coast was unlikely to be attacked, because the "Japs have no bases near and must first get by Hawaii." Still, that didn't prevent the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors from declaring a county emergency.<sup>11</sup>

The column one story noted that safety plans, including what to do for the safety of school children, were being discussed at a meeting of various city and county officials that day.

Ironically, right next to a story announcing Inouye's arrest, was an editorial headlined, "We must guard against hysteria and animosity while speeding defense." The piece stated that the public must avoid hysteria and "indiscriminate animosity" toward the Japanese residents of the community. "It should be remembered that we are at war with Japan, but not with our Nipponese neighbors, many of whom can be counted on for self-sacrificing devotion to this country." The same editorial said any spies or saboteurs would be ferreted out by federal authorities -- the orders of which should be obeyed without question.<sup>12</sup>

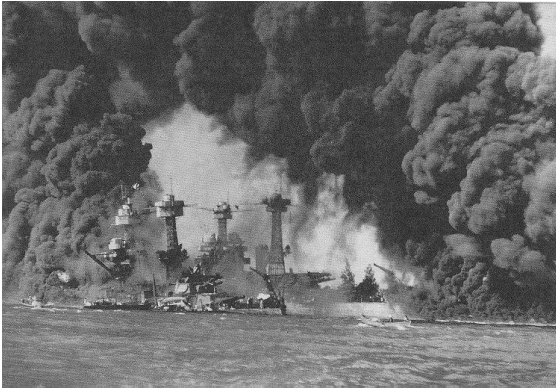
The City Council had a brief organizing meeting Monday night, then a full-blown special session on Tuesday, Dec. 9. On first reading, legislators passed "An ordinance of the city of Redwood City for defense purposes and necessity" -- specifically, a law that gave city authorities the power to enforce blackout regulations.<sup>13</sup>

Penalties for ignoring a blackout order were set at a \$500 fine or 90 days in jail.<sup>14</sup> Also on Tuesday, firefighters continued to inventory the equipment available in Redwood City and neighboring communities. A 9 a.m. log entry stated, "All men on shift working on National Defense data -- gathering same."<sup>15</sup>

McClellan returned to her eighth grade studies at McKinley School on Tuesday. A series of air raid drills ensued at school, although McClellan did not remember much else of the early days on campus after Pearl Harbor. "In my time, people weren't as developed as they are today," she said. "They didn't have the media, television and all. Yes I did understand the word, 'war.' It was scary and frightening."<sup>16</sup>

Although Redwood City suffered no attacks, real -- such as a Japanese submarine's shelling near Goleta -- or imagined, as in the false air raids reported up and down the coast, including San Francisco, the atmosphere was tense. In the tense days after Pearl Harbor, preparations were made for the Japanese attack that some thought was imminent.





*Battleships attacked at Pearl Harbor*

On Jan. 5, 1942, in the midst of other defense preparations, such as a discussion on the proper operation of police and fire sirens, the Redwood City Council authorized the chief of police to purchase a machine gun and six high-powered rifles.<sup>17</sup> Some residents thought the precautions were necessary. "I gave it some wonder," McClellan said. "What came to my mind (was the thought), 'Why are we exempt here in the United States?' You'd hear of other countries in wars and terrible things that were happening. That's true today. We've been very fortunate we haven't been attacked."<sup>18</sup>

Not all were as convinced. "I was always skeptical, I didn't think they were going to come over," McGovern said.<sup>19</sup>

With feelings high after Pearl Harbor, and the draft soon to be fully implemented, local draft boards were forced to make allowances to accept more registrations. Registration headquarters was moved in late December from the fire house to the real estate office in the Redwood City City Hall.<sup>20</sup>

### Yuletide

War could not totally dampen the Christmas spirit in 1941. Blackouts could not force every light out: "Just as there will always be Santa Claus, there will always be Christmas Trees," wrote an un-bylined author in the Dec. 23 *Tribune*. "Lighted ones remain in spite of blackout threats.

Although outdoor lighting (is prohibited), the Christmas Spirit is strong enough to bring out efforts to brighten up the world. As a result, it is still worth driving around Redwood City to see lighting effects."

Such was a common attitude across the country, according to historian A.A. Hoehling. "Somehow in the midst of grief and apprehension, the people of the United States found a certain heart to prepare for Christmas."<sup>21</sup>

In fact, the adage that "war is good for the economy" was confirmed in a Christmas Eve story in the Redwood City *Tribune*. "It will take more than a war scare to keep people of Redwood City from observing the Yuletide spirit," wrote reporter Otto Tallent. "That was observed today when a survey of local business establishments showed a tremendous increase in business over this time last year."<sup>22</sup> One possible reason stated was that local shoppers were too nervous about traveling to San Francisco and getting caught in an air raid to leave Redwood City. In addition, the improving economy, with more jobs, meant there was more money in circulation. "You just can't stop the American people," one merchant is quoted as saying. "When a holiday comes around, they're going to celebrate, war or no war." Conflict or not, inmates of the San Mateo County Jail in downtown Redwood City also kept to routine, having their usual holiday meal of roast pork and applesauce.<sup>23</sup>

As usual, Christmas 1941 was a time of happy homecomings. Jack Galvin, a Redwood City resident and San Jose State football player, showed up unannounced at his parents' doorstep on Christmas Eve. Galvin and his teammates were in Honolulu for games against the University of Hawaii and Willamette University the day the Japanese attacked. The Spartans were stuck in Hawaii for almost two weeks after the bombing due to security concerns, and earned their keep by hiring themselves out as security guards for undermanned military installations.

Eventually, their ship sailed -- under a veil of secrecy -- for the Golden Gate under the escort of a cruiser and two destroyers. "I wouldn't have missed it for the world," Galvin said. "After the first day, I forgot all about football."<sup>24</sup>

### Japanese in Redwood City

Like many neighboring communities, Redwood City had a large number of residents descended from Italian, German and, especially, Japanese ancestry. "Redwood City had a big Japanese community," McGovern said. "I remember our school picture. There were no blacks in it, but all stuffed together was a whole bunch of Japanese."<sup>25</sup>

Although the exact number of Japanese-American residents is difficult to pinpoint, a cursory check of Polk's 1941-1942 Redwood City telephone directory show numerous Japanese names.



(Above: Japanese-American students at Sequoia High School gather for a picture days before they were interned. Courtesy Redwood City Public Library.)

Included are T. Honda at 1301 Redwood Ave., Takeshi Yatabe at 1443 Hudson Street, Mitsuzo Yamada, 921 Woodside Road, and Fugio Matsuyama, 1576 Valota Road.<sup>26</sup> All were listed, in a day when phone books noted occupations, as being in the gardening or nursery businesses. In fact, there were several nurseries in the area of the southwest part of the city, most within a reasonable distance of the intersection of Woodside and Valota roads.

The primary product of those nurseries was the perennial flower of the Chrysanthemum, for which the growers of Redwood City were famous.

During the depressed 1930s, Japanese Americans conducted various promotions in order to keep the industry lucrative, one of which was the popular Chrysanthemum Festival in Redwood City.<sup>27</sup> On Sept. 10, 1941, for example, the Redwood City *Tribune* ran an article headlined "Japanese planning for county fiesta." The story noted the San Mateo County Japanese American Citizens League planned an exhibit at a Sept. 18-21 county event. Sam Kariya, of Belmont, was appointed chairman of a floral exhibit that would display red, white and blue flowers, mostly chrysanthemums. The display would financially back the USO and U.S. Savings Bonds.

Ethnic Japanese were well-involved in the Redwood City community, threats of war notwithstanding. On another page of the Sept. 10 paper, there was an announcement noting that Mr. and Mrs. Tsumomu Kono, of Redwood City were now the proud parents of a 6-pound, 4.5-ounce son, born in Palo Alto.

Well before official internment policies took effect in early 1942, steps were taken against Redwood City Japanese Americans soon after the war began. As mentioned previously, Kotoharu Inouye was arrested on Dec. 7, and other similar arrests followed.<sup>28</sup> Longtime Redwood City resident Gene Firpo stated that his mother, who worked at a downtown Bank of America branch, was instructed on Dec. 8 to pull any Japanese-sounding names out of the bank's files for review by federal authorities.<sup>29</sup> But there were also defenders of the Japanese American among those in influence in Redwood City. Besides the aforementioned Dec. 8 editorial in the *Tribune*, the Redwood City City Council, meeting in special session on Dec. 15, urged that restraint be shown in dealing with citizens of Axis ancestry.

The council unanimously passed a resolution urging citizens "to be tolerant, fair and just in their attitude toward and treatment of" those of Japanese, German and Italian descent. The resolution noted that the Constitution granted safeguards of law to all ethnicities and stated, "many members of these racial groups, particularly those of Japanese descent, who are citizens of the United States find themselves identified through no fault of their own with the enemies of this country because of physical racial characteristics."

In addition, the resolution indicated that mistreatment of those citizens might cause them to become embittered against the United States and "might cause them to go into activities inimical to the best interest of this nation."<sup>30</sup>

After President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 in early 1942, allowing the internment of Japanese Americans, some 1,200 San Mateo County Japanese Americans joined about 7,000 others at the Tanforan Race Track in San Bruno, from which they were transferred to Camp Topaz in Utah to wait out the war.<sup>31</sup>

McClellan remembers there was a Japanese boy in her class that was interned. McClellan also personally witnessed a German butcher who lived nearby detained by the authorities and knew an Italian grocer that was interned briefly, although his wife and child were not. "I wondered why that was happening," she said. "I remember thinking, 'Why would they pick on those people? Those people do the same thing my people do: working and living.'"

Balsamo said things look different in hindsight. "They thought the Japanese were coming over here and that's why they kept all the Japanese out," he said. "People nowadays say, 'That was wrong, we shouldn't have done that.' But it was different times. In those days it was 'the inscrutable Oriental.' I think if you had put it to a vote of the people whether they should get the Japanese out of here and intern them some place, it would have passed overwhelmingly. It was wrong, now we know, but at the time ..." <sup>32</sup>

It should be noted that of the four Japanese names in the phone book listed above, only one, T. Honda, is also listed in the first post-war Polk's directory, released in 1946.

#### Adjusting to war

With the perceived threat of air raids, citizens -- and the local authorities -- were forced to make adjustments.

After a fire station whistle, used to summon auxiliary firemen to duty during a structure fire, was mistaken by many on Dec. 11 as an air raid warning, Fire Chief Mark Ryan declared that the whistle would from that point on only be used for air raids or drills, and no other purpose.<sup>33</sup> An actual air raid siren was installed in central Redwood City on Dec. 13.<sup>34</sup> Also on Dec. 11, Mayor Harold Anderson announced that Redwood City would be divided into districts, and an air raid warden appointed for each.<sup>35</sup>

Readers of the Dec. 23 Redwood City *Tribune* were presented on an inside page with line drawings listing "eight things to do in case of an air raid: keep under cover; if outdoors, lie flat; leave a car or bus; turn off gas connection; avoid top/street floors; open windows partially; put out and conceal lights; be calm and avoid panic."

In that vein, citizens were also required to submit to mandatory neighborhood blackouts. McClellan lived in a small house with a central hallway. During the occasional blackout drills Redwood City faced, her family would huddle in the hallway, with doors closed at every entrance point, and whittle away the time. "In the living room, even with the shades drawn, you couldn't have a light on because the light would peep out. It was amazing to me how far a cigarette match could be seen at night," McClellan said. "We'd sit there in that little hallway. (A neighbor) would come by sometimes, I don't know why - the hall was very small, and we would just sit there and read."<sup>36</sup>

In order to set a good example, the City Council on Dec. 15 accepted a city manager recommendation that the office hours at City Hall be changed. The hours were adjusted by a half-hour to allow City Hall to close at 4:30 p.m. "to enable employees to reach home before dark during the winter months and during the present emergency."<sup>37</sup>

Besides light, "Redwood Citizens" also had to do without something else usually taken for granted by the general populace: the daily weather report.

A Christmas editorial in the Redwood City *Tribune* outlined the reasons: "Among the early casualties of the war in the Pacific was the published daily weather report. Suspension of that widely useful service, which has been relied upon for use in personal plans in a thousand ways every day, was for the purpose of withholding information that would be helpful to the enemy."<sup>38</sup> The editorial quoted from a pre-war report that stated accurate weather reports could be very useful to a potential enemy armada.

Sports were also quickly curtailed due to blackout threats and travel restrictions. A Sequoia High vs. Hayward High wrestling match on Dec. 10 was canceled because Hayward schools were closed. A Dec. 12 Sequoia basketball game, scheduled for the evening, was moved to the afternoon in order to avoid conflicts with blackout orders.<sup>39</sup> The Sequoia Union High School District Board of Trustees debated replacing physical education courses with first aid classes that same day.

With the war, came an increased military presence in Redwood City as soldiers and sailors on leave or furlough passed through town. City council members on Feb. 2, 1942 were asked to debate a request from Lt. Col. Darrow Moencher of the VII Army Corps in San Jose that cities prohibit the use of any intoxicating liquor on the streets or any public place in the city. The Redwood City Council at first decided to see if any nearby towns had similar ordinances, then two weeks later rejected the ordinance outright, saying it "did not appear to be necessary for such an order at this time."<sup>40</sup>

#### In Comparison

Redwood City's adjustment to war was in step with that experienced in many communities, both locally and nationwide. The confusion and shock seen in southern San Mateo County was repeated both across the country and throughout the Bay Area.

For example, the disorientation felt by Shirley McClellan and Art Balsamo's roommate is similar to that of 13-year-old Douglas Jaynes, of Florence, Ala. Jaynes, with "a youthful distortion of geography (that) reflected the worst fears

of citizens of more advanced years"<sup>41</sup> ran around town crying that the Japanese were headed toward Florence via a tributary of a local creek. More locally, San Franciscans were forced to deal with paranoia as well.

Buildings in the city were reinforced against perceived attacks. The main phone switching center, for instance, had a 10-foot high stack of sandbags stockpiled around it to prevent damage from bombs that never came.<sup>42</sup> Troops from the same National Guard unit that moved Reg McGovern from the Embarcadero shot and seriously wounded a woman who was slow to respond to their demands to halt at a Bay Bridge checkpoint. Mrs. Marie Sayre did not remotely resemble a Japanese American, unlike the Chinese American man killed by an angry mob in Seattle that same day.<sup>43</sup>

The Redwood City *Tribune* of Dec. 8, 1941 was like other newspapers of that day in having a curious mix of content. Fronts pages nationally shouted "War!" and similar headlines, while inside pages, sometimes prepared much in advance of the news section, spoke of "gay supper parties" and the customary frivolity of holiday plans. "They suddenly read like epitaphs for an era," wrote Hoehling.<sup>44</sup>

#### Conclusion

Redwood City was turned upside down in the days following Pearl Harbor. Within days, the medium-town casualness that characterized the town before the war was replaced first with confusion, then preparation, then adjustment. The war could not fully dampen Redwood City's Christmas spirit, save perhaps for the town's population of Japanese Americans, who had already seen members of their community arrested and who would soon be forced to leave themselves. Residents were forced to make a quick transition to a war footing, and though their stability was a casualty, their spirits, apparently, were not.

## Endnotes

1. The US Navy would lease two docking berths and add improvements at the Port during the war, the only actual military installation in the city during the war. Davey Properties, *History of Redwood City* (1988, Davey Properties, Redwood City) 23.
2. City of Redwood City website, *Redwood City History*. (Linked from [www.redwoodcity.org](http://www.redwoodcity.org) 1999.)
3. Andrew Role, *California: A History, 5th Ed.*, (1998, Harlan Davidson Inc., Wheeling, Illinois) 265.
4. *Redwood City Tribune*, 5 Dec., 1941.
5. Ronald H. Bailey, *Home Front: USA*, (1978, Time-Life Books, Morristown, N.J.) 17.
6. Interview with Art Balsamo, October 2000, Redwood City, Calif.
7. Interview with Shirley McClellan, November 2000, Redwood City, Calif.
8. Interview with Reg McGovern, November 2000, Redwood City, Calif.
9. City of Redwood City, Fire Station No. 1 Log, Dec. 7, 1941. Karl Vollmeyer Archives.
10. *Redwood City Tribune*, 8 Dec. 1941.
11. *ibid.*
12. *ibid.*
13. Redwood City Council Minutes, Dec. 9, 1941, Redwood City Hall.
14. *Redwood City Tribune*, 9 Dec. 1941.
15. City of Redwood City, Fire Station No. 1 Log, Dec. 9, 1941. Karl Vollmeyer Archives.
16. McClellan interview.
17. Redwood City Council Minutes, Jan. 5, 1942, Redwood City Hall.
18. McClellan interview.
19. McGovern interview.
20. *Redwood City Tribune*, 23 Dec. 1941.
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## Editors Note:

*John Baker, who wrote this story in 2002, says Redwood City has "a special place in my heart because it was where I got my first job out of college." Baker worked for the old Independent newspaper from 1998 through 2000 and then the Redwood City Almanac. The article stemmed from a term paper for a history class San Francisco State where Baker was doing post-grad work. His assignment was to write about a local history topic using primary sources. Baker knew people from that era so he was "eager to hear their experiences first hand."*

Please give to the Archives Committee of the Redwood City Public Library and the Historic Union Cemetery Association by filling and cutting out the applications below. Mail to either:

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Redwood City Public Library  
1044 Middlefield Rd  
Redwood City, CA 94063

Or

Historic Union Cemetery Association  
PO Box 610033  
Redwood City, CA 94063

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**Membership levels:**

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My check is enclosed, payable to The Union Cemetery Association

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 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](mailto: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 2010-11. From all of us at Redwood City Public Library's Archives Committee, we wish you a pleasant Fall.

